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DAFOE

OF THE

WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

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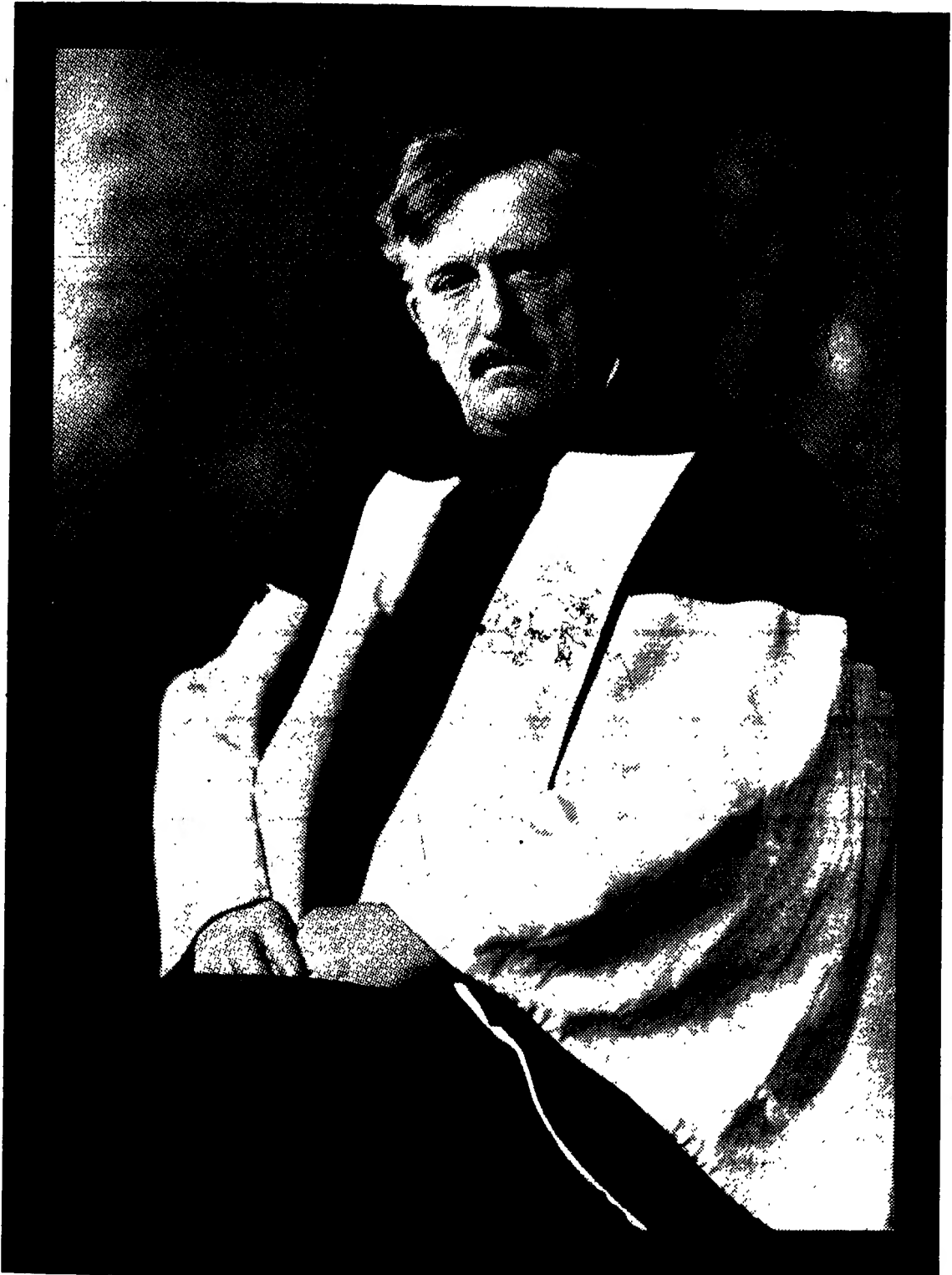
1901-1944

JOHN WESLEY DAFOE

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

1901 - 1944



Chancellor of the University of Manitoba, 1934-1944


NO adequate appreciation of Mr. Dafoc's life can be expressed in less than a full length biography, which we have reason to believe will be undertaken in the not too distant future by those most competent to do it. In the meantime, however, many of his friends have expressed a wish that the spontaneous tributes which were written under the immediate impact of his passing should be preserved in some convenient form. To meet this request the compilation of this little booklet was undertaken as a labour of love by his associates on this paper, whose highest privilege it will be to maintain, however imperfectly, the traditions he so firmly established.

VICTOR SIFTON.

Winnipeg Free Press

31 January, 1944.

THOUGHTS BY ASSOCIATES

— JOHN W. DAFOE —

Editorial in the Winnipeg Free Press January 10th, 1944

THE calamity which yesterday (Sunday, 9 January, 1944) overtook the Free Press and its readers is one which, with a sad pride, we share with a circle of men and women far wider than that of his immediate friends and associates here in Winnipeg. John W. Dafoe, whose life and death are recorded in our columns today, was a national possession, and Canada and Canadians stand impoverished by irrevocable loss. We can say more: far beyond the borders of the country which he served so selflessly for so many years, there are men and women burdened with heavy duties and public responsibilities who, like us at home, will sorely miss the simplicity of his wisdom, his clear-sighted judgment, his sturdy and continuing common sense.

It will be the duty of this newspaper in the days and weeks to come to make some connected attempt to set forth the achievements of this very great man. He had not the slightest ambition for public office or for honors. These he rejected again and again as they were offered him. No cobbler stuck to his last as firmly or as fondly as Mr. Dafoe did to his pen, and it was by the power of that weapon alone that he came, from time to time, to find himself wielding influence as a journalist which many a statesman and politician envied. Power is a heady draught to drink, but no one can truthfully say that this simple, modest man was ever affected by it. He

readily closed the chapters of history he had helped to write and turned his great physical and mental strength to the next task that lay at hand.

Readers of the Free Press are familiar with his achievements. For more than forty years the principles that animated him have shone forth in these columns, elaborated with a wealth of knowledge, and moulded into clear, hard-hitting, decisive prose. His ruling passion was the practical application of the principle of freedom, and he pursued it remorselessly through the infinitely tangled skein of human affairs. No man had a firmer grip of the idea of liberty; no man had a clearer conception of the difficulties involved in maintaining and strengthening it. There was about him nothing of the theorist or the doctrinaire. He was always eminently the realist, choosing from day to day and from year to year to support the men and parties which seemed to him to offer the best chance of taking one step forward to the goal which was never absent from his mind. Seldom, either in his writing or his speech, did he set forth in so many words his hopes, ideals, ambitions. Always he was absorbed in some more particular aspect of them, proclaiming, defending, expounding and often—for the pen turned easily and like lightning into a sword—attacking with a skill and strength it was impossible to turn aside.

It was not easy sometimes, day by day, to get the measure of the man. Hence the charge so easily and so groundlessly made that he was a blind partisan, engulfed in party controversy. It was not so, as faithful readers of the Free Press alone can tell. For they, year after year, studying and reading what he wrote, knew that there was nothing mean or unworthy about the man but that, through the day-to-day confusion of politics and issues, he remained the constant and devoted lover of freedom. There was nothing—private advantage, vested interest, or personal gain—that could swerve him from his course. There was a clear-sighted ruthlessness about the pursuit of his objective that was among the sources of his power, if the word "ruthless" in any sense can be applied to a man so compassionate and tender as he.

All the great fights of his career show the influence of the master principle: his long, never-ending, never-won battle for free trade, his successful advocacy of Dominion status and national equality within the Commonwealth, his powerful demands for constitutional reform, his impassioned writing on collective security and the League to a public that never listened until the world had once more been plunged into the catastrophe of another war, his deep conviction and belief in the issues evoked by that war and his angry contempt for all those special interests which seek to this

hour to draw narrow advantage from the bloody sacrifice of youth.

All this is on the record now so honorably closed. Mr. Dafoe had hoped to live on a little though, as he told his audience at the great dinner given for him two months ago, he knew that he was living "on borrowed time." That hope was greatly shared by his colleagues and associates of the Free Press who knew, none better, the value of the knowledge and the wisdom of their chief. They knew that above all he had hoped to see the war, which he had known for so many years to be inevitable, greatly won. They had shared with him the darkest moments of these past few years, and had seen the steady spark of courage that so greatly sustained him; they had hoped that they would watch him see victory dawn and turn with calm fortitude to the perplexing problems of the peace. That has been denied, and the task now left to them is not an easy one. It is made simpler by the knowledge that there has seldom, if ever, been a newspaper in which more patient study has been jointly made of public issues, where there has been such full discussion of policy and such constant agreement upon it. The lamp lighted on this page for so many years by John W. Dafoe will not go out, though the tending of it will be in hands less able than his to keep it burning.

THE MAN THAT IS GONE

By BRUCE HUTCHISON

MEASURED by every standard of character and achievement, John W. Dafoe was the greatest Canadian spirit of his time. But when this has been justly said, how little it conveys of the man. How poorly all the public tributes of his life and all the obituaries of his death tell the deep and steady fires of his nature. History will rank him among the chief architects of modern Canada, as the sanest voice in the hour of the nation's confusion, the wisest counsellor of our years. But this will not be Dafoe.

Though he had become a name and a legend long before his end, still comparatively few people knew him well. His quality had no cheap flash about it, no tricks to catch the public eye, and fame was the last thing he ever sought. Only those who were close to him knew either his power in the nation or the humanity of his daily life. For these his friends to recall the huge and burly figure, the shaggy head, the sprawling hair, the twinkling eyes, the slow rumbling laugh and then the sure judgment in appraising men and events, is to know that we shall not look upon his like again.

The circumstances of his life and the forces of his character had conspired to make him unique in himself and the most truly Canadian figure of our generation. The spaciousness of our country was in him, the appetite for struggle and accomplishment, the lustiness of broad, open land, the simplicity of solitude and loneliness. All these things he knew in Canada and loved. The whole geography, economy and politics, the anatomy and breathing life of this country, and most of all its inhabitants, were as familiar to him as the palm of his own hand and he never asked more than to be called a citizen of Canada.

Wherein lay the power of this man which drew all men to him, the greatest and humblest? First, it was his wisdom. Men saw it and instantly recognized and clung to it. They recognized him as a silent primal force which made mere brilliance and the gifts of intellect tawdry by comparison. Dafoe was not brilliant. He was

above cleverness. His mind did not work suddenly or fast. On large problems it worked laboriously, painstakingly with patient study of evidence, with a teeming and incredible memory for facts, but it marched ahead irresistibly to conclusion, and almost always the conclusion was right. Other men had more facility and sudden inspiration. Dafoe had wisdom like a deep well, wisdom for great events, and wisdom for the small daily problems of ordinary folks.

His greatness lay also in simplicity. He never betrayed his inner life, his principles, or his friends by striving after honors and rewards. It never occurred to him to seek them, and when he refused them time after time it was without hesitation or regret, because he never wanted them. He was a democrat not only by intellectual conviction but by the very tissue of his being. He could not be anything else. Nothing dazzled him. No man overawed him but only the miracle of mankind.

That was the final secret of Dafoe's place in our country and its history—he believed in man. All his political principles, every word among the millions which he printed on his page, all the long struggle of his life, the writing, speaking, studying and long journeying were devoted to this basic belief. For him man, the individual man, solitary and forever inarticulate among his fellows, the human soul itself, the abiding mystery of human life was the only important thing in the world.

He found that out early in the hard frontier days of his own boyhood. He saw it later in the confusion of cities, in the contests of politics, in the lives of great and small around him. And this belief in man made him fight from his earliest apprentice days against every law, regulation and device which imprisoned men's lives and men's minds. It made him fight—and no Canadian accomplished more in the fight—for the freedom and unity of this nation. But as he grew older, as his knowledge widened and his wisdom deepened, he saw the larger tragedy of men everywhere, gripped in the madness of our era.

It was this conviction that enlarged the scope of his pen from the problems of Canada to the problems of the human family, that took him to the Paris Peace Conference, that made him see the failure of his hopes then, and sent him out almost alone to preach in Canada a new understanding of these things.

A long, lonely struggle seemed to be lost between the wars. Only those about him knew how clearly he saw, and with what anguish he felt, the approaching tragedy while the nation and the world reeled heedlessly towards this war. But all men, even the most stupid, could understand how the war vindicated the judgment of his life and how the hope of a better world brought solace to his last days. The thing against which he had vainly warned had happened. The thing for which he had striven and agonized was dawning as he died. No man anywhere had contributed more of his devotion and life-stuff to this end. If Canada is ready for its part in this universal project no man did more to prepare it.

But Dafoe did not know man merely as a political concept, a distant cause. He knew men as men. How well he knew them—the captains and the kings, the politicians, the rich men, the great of the world. Such men repaired in a steady stream to his office through forty years and listened to his advice which was never given if not asked. He did not say much, a few quiet words, a friendly look out of those tired old eyes, but it was always enough. Invariably it swept aside the non-essential and went straight to the point. In his matchless journalism he would argue a case step by step in vivid English as compact as a legal brief and to a sure conclusion until his editorials were recognized as among the best in our language. But in private he spoke in the plainest phrases. He would shatter an argument, reduce a bewildering complication of events in a phrase or two, or destroy a glittering structure of pretence with a homely joke. For he knew men, their strength and their weakness, and felt himself one of them.

That is why humble men, unknown poor men, streamed through his office with the

great. He could talk to them in their own language and understand their thoughts. You felt, sitting opposite him as his great body overflowed his chair and he, looked at you shrewdly under shaggy eyebrows, that he read every thought in your mind. It was quite impossible to practice deception in his presence and it was impossible in his presence to feel mean. With him all men knew themselves to be men.

While his rage at false causes was shattering, he had an extraordinary tolerance for men by themselves, even the most frail and erring. To every one of the young men about him in the Free Press his counsel was the same: Never wound, never hit below the belt, and always—one recalls the exact words—remember the good things about a fellow; other folks will remember the other things only too well.

This was the simple and kindly man whom the men and women of this newspaper knew and loved and who, for them—in his daily appearance at the office, his long labors with the stub of a pencil, his carefully worked-over copy, his genial presence among them, his gay laugh—was as reliable and seemed as permanent as the seasons. It is hard for them to realize that his never-failing force has gone.

Dafoe himself had recognized that his remaining days might be few, but he wanted to live a little longer for one reason only—to see the outcome of the world process of war and peace which he had watched so faithfully all these years. He wanted, he said, a few days before he died, "to stick around a bit and see how it works out."

This wish was not granted. He went without the answer he sought but with his powers undimmed, and as he would have asked to go, in harness, at work, serving to the last hour the things and the men he believed in. Perhaps after all the public honor has been paid, the deepest tribute of all to the essential greatness of this man, the reward he would value most was that every man around him, every man who worked with him and knew all sides of him, revered and loved him as a father, and knows today that life, whatever it brings, will not be the same now that he has gone.

NEWSPAPERMAN'S IDEAL

By H. B. GUEST

IN the spring of 1919 when the Chief was just back from the Peace Conference, and when he knew that the writer had just returned from overseas and had some previous newspaper experience, he offered him a place on the editorial staff of the Free Press. That was the beginning of one of the most important relations in the life of this writer. Mr. Dafoe was a thorough newspaper man. That was his absorbing interest, into which he threw all his energies and to which he devoted his unusual natural endowments. He was the newspaper man's ideal.

Members of the staff could not have wished for a more helpful consultant. His fund of information, acquired through years of industry and observation, seemed endless, and more important was his balanced judgment, his shrewd ability to see around any subject and not be misled.

Only a truly big man would have remained, as he did, simple, modest and seeking no honors in spite of great achievements in his profession. Ideas of self-importance never troubled him, and he was very human. However intense the concentration upon some serious problem, he could usually see a lighter side which helped to relieve the stress. And the heartiness of his laugh was tonic to those who heard it.

One of his endowments, which accounted in some degree for his capacity for work, was an amazing imperturbability. The door of his office was open always to members of the staff or others. While writing a leader for the next morning, he might have a score of interruptions but they never seemed to impede his progress or break the thread of his thought. He was patient in giving a hearing to outsiders who came with views which were sometimes of no particular importance. During the depression years he had calls from many a man who came to speak of his own immediate necessity, and no one knows the number of these who were thankful for some help.

There was no field of news, nothing in human relations, in which he was not interested. He could discuss international problems but he was also interested in many of our local affairs—in the Community Chest and in every other worthy community enterprise. Second only to the filling of the Chest was the importance, in his view, of bringing all sections of the people closely together in that campaign. He was enthusiastic about that advantage. Municipal finance drew his attention at times, and the working of the P.R. electoral system. There have been objections elsewhere to the use of P.R. or the alternative vote, but he was convinced that they were fundamentally right, that there were worse objections to the old voting system. And his strong support helped to ensure the success of electoral reform in Winnipeg and Manitoba.

In 1925 the Chief went to Australia to the Imperial Press Conference. He wrote about the conference and about Australia, but many readers of the Free Press will remember the charming series of articles in lighter vein which he also wrote on that trip—about the sea voyage and about fellow passengers and their ideas. Even at home in Winnipeg, he could abandon politics and world problems for a very different field, as when he addressed a public meeting on the earlier Canadian poets, many of whom he had known personally when living in the East. There had always been a place on the editorial page for good verse of the present day.

Broad sympathies, patience and tolerance were strong characteristics of the Chief constantly seen by those who were near him, and they would undoubtedly have changed the opinion of some who knew him only as the vigorous exponent of views which they did not like. While he challenged opinions that he believed were wrong, he defended always the right of everyone to express his opinion on any subject. He was willing to listen to people whose views had not impressed him, to see what merit there might be in their ideas.

That was his thoroughly democratic spirit. A nation of yes-men and yes-women would never achieve anything. There must be clash of opinion, and the hope of the country is in the triumph of informed and well-based opinions.

This was the purpose of his writing and of the controversial discussion in which he engaged. It was increasingly so in later years. He was not given to proclaiming high ethical purposes, preferring that peo-

ple should see for themselves the value of what he was doing. But on two public occasions as he came to the later years of his career, he did express the sincere hope that he had accomplished something that would be of real value to Canada and to his fellow Canadians.

This modesty and genuine purpose, and his unfailing interest and thoughtfulness for those about him, will be their treasured memories of the old Chief.

THE CHIEF AS A POET

BY W. E. INGERSOLL

I USED to write poetry," said the Chief, in that great last address which reviewed things almost forgotten in a life that had touched all life. None of the poetry written in that thoughtful long ago is extant now, but the spirit of poetry stayed always in that great man, and it never slept. Not only is it apparent and outcropping in many a succinct singing phrase in the legacy of editorials left by the Chief—an outstanding example is the title, *The Abomination of Desolation*, he gave to an article describing a battlefield—but his vicarious enjoyment of rhythmic composition was shown in his friendship for poets. Writers of bathos were lucky to escape the chute. But if one came who had a Poem—and the Chief knew a Poem at a glance—he could be a beggar and barefoot and the Chief would step down like King Cophetua to meet and greet him on his way.

The present writer remembers when Bliss Carman called to see the Chief. The writer of *Low Tide on Grand Pré* and *Vestigia* and *The Yule Guest* had a nose straight as the sides of a triangle and he

drew down his hair low over his forehead. Such a man, with such a nose and with hair so drawn down, appeared one day in the centre of the Free Press editorial floor, looking around him with fine lost eyes. This writer spied him and was immediately seized with such rapture and reverence that for a moment he could not budge so much as his smallest finger or toe. But he broke the spell—he had to, or lose a chance that might never come again. He approached the tall, thin nosed, forelocked man. He said—scarcely daring to hope he was right—"You are not Mr. Carman?" "Yes," said the Presence, simply. "I am. And I'm looking for John Daffoe."

Breathlessly—and it was one of the large moments of his life—this scribe led Bliss Carman to the Chief. They helloed each other like brothers, and no one else got into the Chief's office all forenoon.

The Chief and Archibald Lampman were John and Archie to each other too. And E. W. Thomson, who wrote prose idylls of Ontario's pioneer Highlanders, could find the Chief's latchstring out, no matter what time he called or who was in.

HE WAS A CANADIAN

By J. H. GRAY

J. W. Daffoe was many things to many men. To those who worked closest with him he was primarily an editor, and only they knew what a superlative editor he was. He was a statesman among statesmen. He was a scholar among scholars for he loved fine literature and poetry with catholic interest and discriminating taste. He was many other things as well—historian, philosopher, a prodigious maker of friends. But perhaps more than anything else he was a Canadian.

To be a Canadian in this Canada of ours is not easy. It is much easier to be an easterner or a westerner, a Quebecker or a Torontonians, a Manitoban or a Britisher. But J. W. Daffoe was none of these. He was a Canadian, and none worked harder at being a Canadian. Those who failed to understand this could not understand the man. They could not understand his newspaper. Their own attention was focussed upon the individual trees in an isolated section of the forest of Canadian nationhood. His concern was always for the welfare of the whole forest, to protect it from ravage by the storms from without, to save it from destruction by the spread of the deadly ground fires of sectionalism from within.

No forest-ranger of the north could match the zeal of this protector of the forest of Canadian nationhood. He was a fire-ranger who for 60 years kept his extinguisher going against the sectional smudges which threatened the forest. Between the fire-fighting he was the ardent conservationist who sought to increase the growth and health of the forest. Yet the thing which gave pattern and cohesion to his life was really neither of these. Rather it was his interest in the trees themselves—in the individual Canadian Citizen. He loved the forest, but it was the individual tree, the Canadian citizen, that counted.

To aspire to growth and vigor, was the birthright of every citizen. But to achieve the greatest ultimate good, the strong, the more fortunately placed, must not be allowed to prosper at the expense of the

weak. Growth must be sound and steady; it must not be rank. The whole forest must grow and this can only be achieved if all the trees within the forest are alive and healthy. He loved the forest, but he fought doggedly through a lifetime against people with grandiose schemes for expanding the forest by crippling, restricting and stunting the growth of the individual trees.

Steeped as he was in the history of his country, he knew that the existence at all of this country as a nation was an historic accident. It was what biologists call a sport or a mutation. He loved to dwell upon this aspect of Canadian nationhood; and because fate had given us a country he felt that there was a great responsibility resting upon us all to keep what fate had provided in existence.

He knew, so very well, that the things which divided one Canadian from another were much stronger than the things which held them together. There were barriers of race and religion and language. There were, in addition, geographic and economic barriers which blocked one section off from another; barriers so imposing that any rational nation builder would have thrown up his hands in despair if he had been invited to construct a nation on the northern half of this continent.

The things which divided Canada were very real. They were potent and volatile. But to J. W. Daffoe, they were also a challenge. Somehow, he felt that they could be overcome, and the process of overcoming them would produce a great and happy breed of men. His life, thus, became dedicated to the task of removing frictions and welding the diverse elements into a national whole.

He quickly discovered that this meant a long and always desperate struggle. He could see how the adoption of certain fiscal policies would enrich one section of the country and impoverish another. He became known as the champion of the west against the east in the struggle for free trade. But this was a distortion; the strug-

gle was to prevent Canada, this nation, this historic accident, from disintegration. He lent his support to the great Progressive movement which gave authentic voice to the protest of the west. Then he led in the movement to merge it with the Liberal party in the interest of national unity.

When Canada achieved the status of an independent nation within the Commonwealth, he rejoiced for he had helped to bring it off. But he realized that independence brings responsibility and he insisted that Canada should play a responsible role in world affairs. By doing this he saw it helping to preserve the peace of

the world while at the same time developing its own national spirit. Canada tried to turn her back on the world but J. W. Dafoe would have no part of such action. In the end there was no pleasure for him in the vindication of his views, for it took another world war to bring it about.

In undertaking to weld such a nation as Canada together, no man ever shouldered a greater burden. Often he was repaid for his efforts by bitter abuse. People who did not understand his Canadianism, impugned his motives and hurled biting epithets. They called him a radical, a blind partisan, reactionary, anti-British, a traitor. But he was none of these. He knew what he was. He was a Canadian.

SCANNING FIELDS OF WAR

BY HAROLD MOORE

THE good soldier's detestation of war found in Mr. Dafoe seemed only to sharpen his grasp of the movements in a war. Of course his business was to follow the campaigns of the three major wars in which Canadians fought during his editorial regimes, but he showed unusual, and often unerring, "field sense" in drawing conclusions from sets of actions officially reported. He might be supposed to be too much of the literary student, too immersed in the study of public affairs, to have either aptitude or inclination to weigh or describe the vicissitudes and horrors of war's conflicts. This was far from being so. He had so much of the aptitude of a writer on war themes, that had it been his fate to have gone into the field of battle as a reporter of war, the fame he would most certainly have achieved must have equalled the renown he gained as a writer on constitutional and political and international subjects.

The only time he ventured into the literature of war he wrote the gem entitled "Over the Canadian Battlefields." This comprised notes taken on a little journey of the battlefields and had—or so their author demurred—only an evanescent timeliness. They were too good to be dismissed. They were written out of a masterly sweep of the war as Dafoe traced

it in his mind over the scarred and desolated fields over which he drove.

In that little book, written as much as a tribute to young Canadian manhood in the last war as an intentional survey of the campaigns of 1915-1918, Mr. Dafoe reached that high watermark he wished attained in anything written for his editorial page. He painted with steady brush:

"I stood almost in the centre of this huge battlefield (along the Souchez stream) in the closing hours of a sombre March day; a light mist was shrouding the crests of the uplands; in the valleys the darkness of night was already falling; for fleeting moments the dying sun, through a breach in the cloud battlements, threw gleams of wintry sunshine over the scene. Nearby were the abandoned ruins of what was once the hamlet of Carency. To the right Vimy Ridge rose slowly to the sky line, flaring up its northern end into the steeper slopes of 'the Pimple.' . . . Within a radius of three miles from the place upon which we stood, over one hundred thousand French soldiers who fell in six months' fighting in 1915 lie buried . . ."

Critics owing little to Canadian letters paid tribute to both the literary charm and the gifted insight shown in this book. The reviewer in the London Times said:

"'Over the Canadian Battlefields,' by John W. Dafoe, is quite one of the best of the small books on the war and comparable in some ways with Mr. Masefield's 'Gallipoli.' The compact ease of Mr. Dafoe's style, his power of rapid descriptions, and his critical observations proclaim him a journalist of distinction and humanity. . . . The author's power of lucid and prolific summary of military operations" was commended as a feature of distinction in his intellectual equipment.

Then came this war, and early in it Mr. Dafoe was called upon to broadcast a survey that would be "Facing the Facts." On a Sunday afternoon exactly three years and three months ago he delivered a national broadcast that elevated the thoughts and raised the hopes of Canadians. He set us in that proximity to destruction out of which he could see us with a hope to emerge:

"Beyond doubt," broadcast Mr. Dafoe that Sunday afternoon, "civilization was trembling in mid-June upon the brink of the abyss. It was saved from immediate ruin by the courage of the British people. The nearer they were to disaster, the firmer their resolution to resist, the greater their scorn for those who looked to them to yield, the stronger their confidence in their power to meet, to break, and to turn aside the impending fury of the barbarians. That superb courage found expression in the immortal words of Churchill; and as those ringing accents went around the world, the defences of civilization, both moral and material, began everywhere to gather strength."

As Mr. Dafoe spoke over the radio that Sunday afternoon, fear had not been dispelled though despair was lifting for the British nations. He said, alluding to the battles in the sky over England being fought daily at the time:

"An American poet, in a famous poem, speaks of the electrical effect upon all mankind of a deed done for freedom. When have there ever been such deeds for human liberty as those daily enacted in the English sky by these young heroes? Is it not certain that their valor will kindle an admiration, a devotion and a spirit of emulation that may save the world?"

Mr. Dafoe's husky voice seemed to be fighting over the radio to make clear to his fellow Canadians how the ray of hope could spread into a golden opportunity. He saw what had to be done, now that British courage gave civilization a chance to survive; and what he proclaimed in his broadcast, in its fullest application, fairly enunciates the course taken by the Allies in the war so far:

"Since the deadlock today," (while the Battle of Britain was still being fought), said Mr. Dafoe, "cannot continue for ever, since the issue is beyond compromise, the task of the future must be to bring into the field influences and striking forces that will destroy this conspiracy against mankind. To that end the nations, which are holding today the posts of honor and duty, will not limit their energies or spare their sacrifices. They intend, in the great words of Pitt, to save themselves by their exertions and the world by their example. That example invites the brave and the free of the whole world to associate themselves in this greatest crusade for humanity in order that victory may be early, overwhelming and fruitful. The fruits of victory," he said in conclusion, "must be the attainment of the vision that great and wise men saw so clearly 21 years ago: a world of peaceful co-operation in good work by free men and free nations; a world from which the devil-worship of Mars will be for ever outlawed."

John W. Dafoe never seemed to allow himself to be blinded by the sand that hid the horizon from many eyes, nor did he fail to read the signs of war as unerringly as he analyzed the ways of men.

— DAFOE AND AUSTRALIA —

By B. T. RICHARDSON

ONE of our major discoveries in a recent trip to Australia and New Zealand was the number of contacts that John W. Dafoe had maintained in political, business and journalistic circles in those dominions. Mr. Dafoe had kept many of these relationships in good repair for a number of years. Possibly a score of men, many of them occupying influential places in the life of their country, commissioned us to convey their regards to him on our return to Canada. This we did.

Some of these acquaintanceships dated back to 1909, when the first Empire press conference was held in London. The Australians and New Zealanders travelled through Canada on the way to England. Mr. Dafoe and others of the Canadian party joined forces with them, and they all journeyed to London together. A number of publishers and editors from the Pacific dominions visited Canada in 1920, and Mr. Dafoe was a member of a press party from Canada that visited Australia and New Zealand in 1925.

The man who will certainly be linked with Borden and others as a founder of the Canadian nation, was also an architect of the British Commonwealth of Nations as we have it today. But that was not all. He kept his friendships alive through correspondence and occasional meetings; and he kept his knowledge fresh of events in the sister dominions by sharing information at first hand. We found that the late Col. Woods, of Calgary, had done the same, for several editors and publishers in the Antipodes recalled meetings and letters with him also. Walter Nash, Deputy Prime Minister of New Zealand, among others

told us of an intimate acquaintanceship with Mr. Dafoe extending over many years.

This side of Dr. Dafoe's life showed an amazingly wide circle of influence that persisted over many years. We had discovered other arcs of the same circle in the United Kingdom in 1934 and 1935, and in the United States on various visits there. The true meaning of the title "citizen of the world," we think, lies in the discovery of a man's influence and prestige in far and unexpected places. It is a title truly applicable to Mr. Dafoe, and to few other Canadians.

So we had written from Ottawa as a first obligation to Mr. Dafoe about the people ~~he had known in Australia and New Zealand~~. That was just the other day. The return mail brought a four-page letter in his handwriting. The Chief chatted about the Australians and the New Zealanders. We had a date, that will never be fulfilled, to talk about them at greater length.

This would have been one of the last letters written by Mr. Dafoe. He concluded in these words:

"I think of the year before us and the work that lies ahead. I think that the Free Press, not only in its immediate impact upon the public but still more as a source of information for writers and speakers, will have heavy demands made upon it. So we shall have to put on the war paint and tighten our belts. I think I can make some kind of a contribution, but I am relying on the younger men. Best wishes."

THE CHIEF IS GONE

BY KENNETH M. HAIG

A GREAT shadow half-engulfed the Free Press Building last night, a shadow darkened rather than lightened by the blue effulgence from the composing room windows. The lights stared into blackness, and the front light waited dumbly for its enkindling spark.

The Chief did not come. The Chief will never come again.

The sense of waiting lingers. The sense of waiting that gathers as a load upon the eyelids, a weight upon the heart.

That tall figure, those slightly stooped shoulders, that grave face suddenly illumined by a welcoming smile, that slow measuring step, that cane held lightly, surely they will come through the big doors, surely they will reach the elevator. Surely he will utter his cheery "Good Morning," and surely the welcoming unbought and unbuyable "Good Morning" will come back to him. The Fourth Floor is waiting. His office is waiting. His desk and the piled-up papers, the book shelves, the pencils. The Chief does not come.

"The business office works for the rest of us," he once remarked. "We'd better break it to them gently," I replied, as the easy conversation went around, the conversation that might suddenly burgeon beyond the present moment and touch the horizons of the world. Came the throaty, husky laugh, "We'll say, then, that we all work for each other."

Not only say it, but think it, live it, act upon it. Every least office boy, every junior stenographer included in his notice. Every reporter an object of his friendly, his comradely eye. Every maintenance man his friend, a friendship extended always on the dignified plane of one human being to another. "I am in awe of electricians," he remarked. "It's a miracle to me."

Occasions, occasions, occasions, how they crowd in on the memory! How they jostle each other. . . . How they take the glint from the sunshine and spread the daylight in thin layers. . . . For over this threshold his frequent foot will never pass again.

Four o'clock of a September afternoon. Four o'clock and warm autumn blazing on all the plains and along the rivers. "I am going to Ponemah for the week-end. Mrs. Dafoe and I." No mistaking the rhythm in his voice. The satisfaction. The contentment. "You cannot beat Manitoba in the fall." And there he was, striding along the beach, where Lake Winnipeg extends itself almost as the ocean, its far waves breaking beyond the reach of the eye. There he was watching the wheeling seagulls, marking the flight of the water fowl against the crimson horizon. There he was under the wide and windy sky looking to the "highest of the heights of heaven," seeing where "the stars still keep their ancient peace." There he was too, in a most reprehensible, doubtless dearly beloved sweater, raking up the leaves.

It was in London and the fourth Imperial Press Conference was meeting. There was a lot of talk and many functions, many comings to and fro, many earnest searchings as to Empire relationships, and as to the height of one's top hat or whatever it is that men have to worry about on sartorial lines. Along the corridor past my door came a number of Canadian delegates obviously in a huddle on the clothes question. The press party was to be received the next morning by Their Majesties at Buckingham Palace. Above the discussion rose the Chief's voice floating over my transom. "Well, I'll put on my morning coat, of course, and my top hat, but I'll be damned if I'll wear spats."

There was the function at that same conference when amid all the suavity of a London hotel, with the rows at each plate of fragile glasses twinkling their smooth content under the chandeliers; with beautifully gowned women, and men whose black and white was here and there relieved by the flash of orders; with orchestra violins drifting their music among the flowers, and with an opening of one or two speeches by persons whose names make the headlines of the world. Then "silence was craved" of

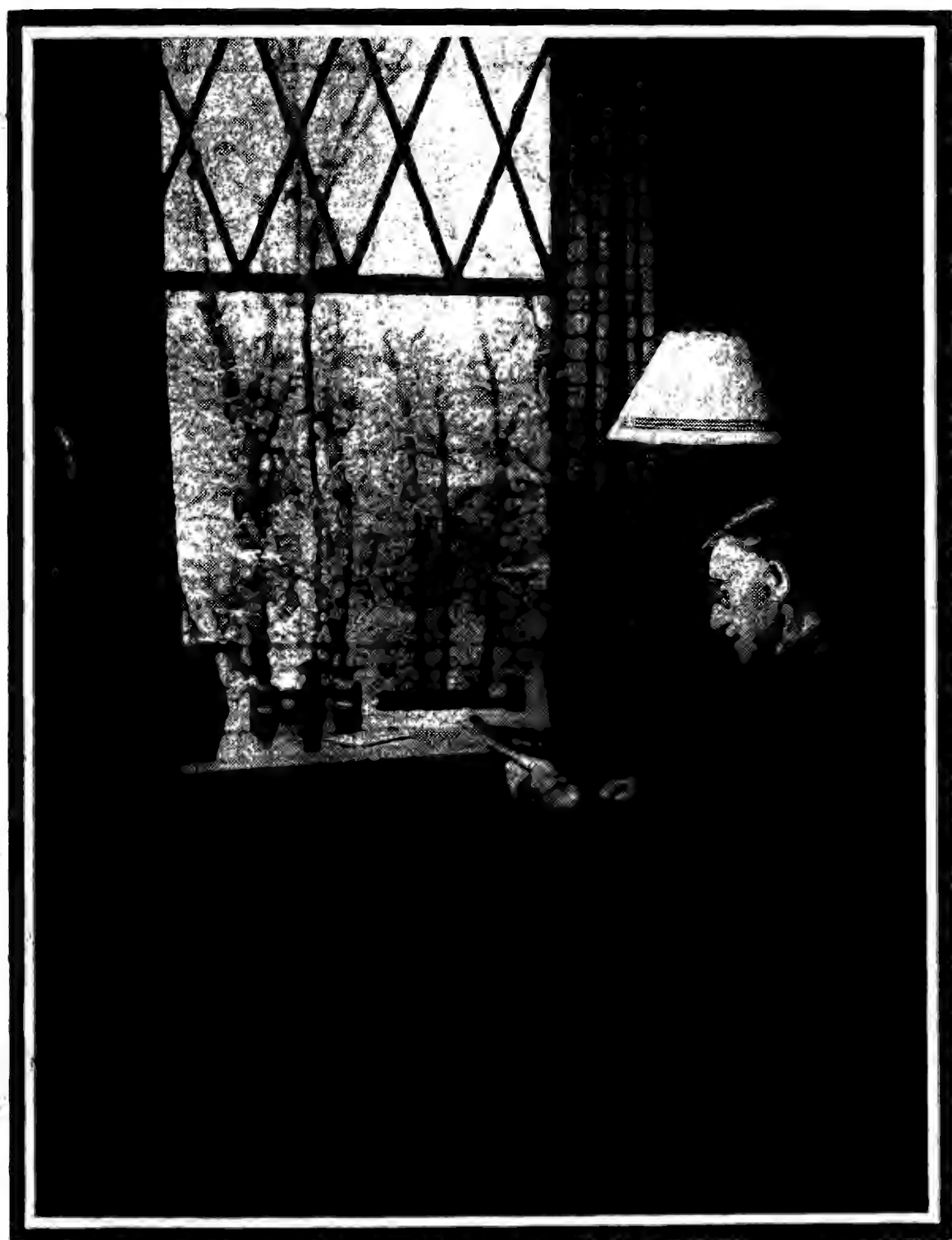
"My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen" for "Mr. J. W. Dafoe, editor of the Winnipeg Free Press." The Chief looked shy, and his sensitive hands played a little with the long stem of his glass. Then he was speaking of Empire relationships; then he was speaking of Canada and the United States: "We are retaining in perfect friendliness and good nature Canada's full national integrity against the indirect and uncalculated influence--there is no calculation in the influence of the United States of America--of the most powerful individual nation the world has ever seen. . . . Then there is Australia. No country that I have ever visited, with its monuments and its records of the bloody past, has ever moved me as the sight of the people out there resolutely trying to build a new earth." Now he was speaking of the fellowship of the English-speaking world. The prophet's mantle was about his shoulders, the mantle embroidered in glowing colors of the poets and the great voices bearing in from the

twelve winds. The room was quiet. Listening.

There were the times when he was home from travelling, from here and there. The special time when he was back from the greatest experience of his full life, the Versailles Peace Conference, and the Fourth Floor had assembled to hear the "off the record." It was fun, The flashing portraits of great men, or at least front page men; the glints of laughter at human foibles; the feel of Paris when its streets were become avenues of the world; the stories of President Wilson turning inevitably almost against his will, turning time and again to Borden, his North American brother who would understand. The stories of Prince Feisal with his glittering entourage, and of "that remarkable young man," Lawrence of Arabia. Sharing, sharing, giving, encouraging.

The Chief does not come.

The Chief will never come again.



DAFOE IN WASHINGTON

BY CHESTER A. BLOOM

JOHN Wesley Dafoe was a man with a clearly determined mission and, therefore, that rarity among his fellows—a perfectly happy man so long as he was able to fight for his objectives, which is to say, to the very last hour of his seventy-seventh year. To put it in the way of speaking of the West which he loved so greatly, John W. Dafoe metaphorically died fighting with his boots on, his face to the enemy, and in his heart a profound conviction of ultimate victory.

What were John W. Dafoe's objectives? It would be presumptuous, indeed, for me to attempt to set down here the fundamental views of Canada's greatest editor; I can only recite the impressions left on my mind from my contacts with Mr. Dafoe's writings and conversations. Clearly, he sought these achievements:

A united, strong and free Canadian nation of equal voice in the British Commonwealth.

A Canada free from venality and administered on the basis of honest, statistical facts and not fancies.

A world where men of good will may be protected from the grosser superstitions rooted in human selfishness, greed, ignorance and dishonesty which are watered and cultivated by men of evil will.

Practical steps to establish order in the world as a pre-requisite to political and economic freedom.

These are principles that have nothing whatever to do with party policies of high tariff and protection or low tariff and free trade. They are the principles of good versus bad administration. John W. Dafoe was always fighting for sound, intelligent and honest administration.

It follows that a man with such objectives, pursued with such deadly pertinacity and determination as that of John W. Dafoe, must be the foe of disorder, venality in public life, and of economic stupidity. Every political trickster will hate him. Every political hack who thinks that an editor who has helped a government to

power thereby wears a government collar will call him traitor who dares oppose any deed of the sytophants. John W. Dafoe, to borrow a phrase of President Roosevelt, "welcomed their hatred." He slew them joyously with a trenchant pen.

These conclusions are not only drawn from Mr. Dafoe's famed editorials but from other sources. His private comment on public affairs, his deductions and his wise advice in the sheaf of letters written to me in Washington through many years helped me over many a hurdle. It is a remarkable exhibit of the man's inexhaustible energy and thoughtfulness that he would take time from his crowded hours to write such letters.

They were buttressed by the last long conversation I held with Mr. Dafoe. That was when he visited Washington in June, 1941. He was then in his seventy-fifth year. A week was taken up with conferences from early morning to late at night with leading British and American personages. I have reason to remember the exhausting task of making appointments and timing them correctly. Mr. Dafoe never appeared fatigued.

On the last day of his visit, we took a long walk. It was one of those hot, humid Washington days, tempered with a moist southerly breeze. We walked from the hotel at Fifteenth and F streets down to the Mall, across the grounds of the Washington monument, and far around the new causeway of the Potomac Basin enclosing the just completed Jefferson memorial. It was a picture of almost unearthly beauty—gleaming white columns reflected from the depths of the silky, turquoise water in the basin, framed in the new greenery of the cherry trees—overhead, scuds of white clouds drifting across the azure sky.

John Dafoe stood long and silent as he, gazed at this latest testimonial to one of the first of America's long line of vanished fighting Democrats. Then we walked on for a last view of the great temple which is the Republic's homage to Abraham Lin-

coln. I would have given much for this other great Democrat's thoughts; but these were moments for silence.

And so we walked and talked a little, amid long silences back to Constitution avenue—a good three and a half miles. It was the first time that I had some little glimpses, perhaps, into the inner recesses of this man's heart. For beyond all his wisdom, his extraordinary clarity of thought and genius for stating it concisely, John

W. Dafoe was essentially a kind man. Intolerant of dishonesty in public life, pertinacious in pursuing the public muddlers, he had a thorough understanding of the weaknesses of poor humanity and a strong disinclination to judge the individual harshly. Perhaps when the accounts of this long and useful life are added up, John W. Dafoe's tempering of his judgments with kindness will weigh most heavily for a better Canada; for all of us surely can do with a little more kindness.

THE DAFOE MEMOIRS

By GRANT DEXTER

IT was well known among his intimates that John W. Dafoe, at the time of his death, was about to begin his memoirs. These, of course, will never be written in the form he intended, but interest attaches to his plans because of the revealing light they shed upon his character.

Memoirs are usually the backward glance of notable men who have completed their active work but who have yet the time and the energy to tell their own story. In this sense, however, the writing of memoirs definitely did not interest Mr. Dafoe. His work was not finished and would never have been finished while his mind retained its vigor. He was interested in the past only because he believed that certain phases of it were of value to the future. It was the future, not the past, which really interested him. In his last conversation with me, he discussed the memoirs in some detail. And what he did not tell me then, he had already told to others.

He intended to select three or four periods of the past and write of them. He would begin with the 1880's which would be divided into two parts. The first part would deal with Edward Blake whose policies were still short of achievement and whose work was not rightly appreciated. True, his friend Prof. Underhill was doing a life of Blake, but there were aspects of

it that he knew at first hand. He had much original material. What he had particularly in mind was Blake's contribution to the structure of the Commonwealth. The abolition of appeals to the Privy Council would also come into it.

The other part would deal with political issues and movements that had their rise in the 1880's and early 1890's and which were still operating powerfully today. A clearer understanding of the origin of these forces would help us find the true path in the future.

Reflection over the years had persuaded him that Riel's hanging had been a political hanging. Justice, in the ideal sense, had played small part. The Government at Ottawa in 1885 had weighed the gains and losses and had decided that hanging would be the least costly. How odd that Riel should still haunt Canada. If he had been strung up in 1870 at the time of the Red River rising, no one would have thought twice of it and he would be no more than a name in our history books. Riel's hanging alienated Quebec from the Conservative party. Before then Quebecers had voted Conservative just as readily, and more so, than they had voted Liberal. The national disunity of modern times had no counterpart in the first 18 years of Confederation.

And then there was the Jesuit Estates issue and the Government's policy here had alienated Ontario. The Conservative party became disunited. Dalton McCarthy, a front-bench member, the king-pin in the Conservative organization, a top-notch lawyer in Toronto, the head of the Orange order, began to attack the party leaders at Ottawa. It was McCarthy who, during a western tour, had inspired Joe Martin to precipitate the Manitoba School question. And so he went on.

Mr. Dafoe had done much writing on the issues at the time. There was his daily column from Ottawa in the Star in 1884 and 1885. And, most particularly, he recalled an article he had written from Winnipeg, unsigned, for a Toronto paper called The Week, edited by Charles G. D. Roberts. He had kept nothing and he wanted those columns and the piece from The Week. There was also a letter Israel Tarte had shown him at Montreal at the time the Manitoba School Act was before the Privy Council. This was a letter from a prominent member of the Quebec clergy to a prominent Englishman at the Vatican, urging that the Vatican make every effort to have the British government put pres-

sure on the Privy Council to throw out the statute. He thought the letter had been published and he wanted the text. He had never understood why all the historians and biographers of the period had missed this letter and, indeed, why so little public attention had been paid to it. In the case of the letter to Laurier which he had printed—"the calculated indiscretion" as he called it in his Laurier—there had been an uproar.

The third section was to deal with the origin of the Progressive party. The "scramble" today for possession of the title "Progressive" showed how deep and enduring was the impression made by the original party. Unfortunately, the purposes of the Progressive party had been forgotten by most of those who hankered for the title. The original movement, for example, had nothing in common with the C.C.F. of today, although the C.C.F. claimed and could make a show of direct descent. It would be well for the future to re-state the true objectives of the old Progressives.

Thus, the memoirs were really to be tracts for these times.

SOME DAFOE LETTERS

By G. V. FERGUSON

IT was a deep conviction of John W. Dafoe that an editor's function was to stick to his desk and write; and he accepted outside responsibilities only when these were thrust upon him in a way that brooked no denial. It was in this way that he became a member of the Rowell-Sirois commission and during the years from 1937 until well after the outbreak of war in 1939 he was, more often than not, away from his office.

Today, looking back at those critical years when the appeasement policies of the democratic nations were in full flower, it is possible to open the file of letters he wrote to his colleagues on the Free Press, commenting, advising, and suggesting the line the paper might take as the world took the last fatal terrible steps into the war he knew was coming. Our readers may perhaps be interested in coming with us behind the scenes to re-read some of those letters with us.

First there is one, written in the summer of 1937, when Mr. Dafoe had gone east on business connected with the Canadian Institute of International Affairs. He was in Ottawa, engaged in the business of raising some money for Institute work:

"I had no one to help me here but I buzzed around with a quite considerable success. P. D. Ross (of the Ottawa Journal and his oldest friend)—bless his generous old soul—threw \$500 in the pot. . . .

"I go on to Kingston (to an American-Canadian conference) and hope I'll have sense enough to look on. . . . But I don't know. I went to a League of Nations Society lunch at Ottawa—the executive committee and some others—and the first thing I knew I was battling with the boys who were arguing that the society should submit itself to the vagaries of current public opinion. . . . I told them that the society had better quit if it did not regard it as its duty to give a lead to public opinion. . . . I later wondered whether I wasn't a damn fool to allow myself to be worked up. 'Ephraim is joined to his idols.' "

As the months passed his restiveness at the course of the foreign policy of both Canada and the United States steadily grew. He had been long convinced that Hitler meant to make trouble and that only a firm and open and expressed determination to oppose aggression could prevent the outbreak of war. Hence the semi-humorous but irritated note in a letter from Ottawa, May 26, 1938, where he was deep in the labors of the Royal Commission:

"With all the queer goings on here—Billy King expatiating on his invisible foreign policy and Eddie Beatty tilting at his favorite windmill, you may have been expecting me to resume my role as editor and give you a hint or so about policy. . . ."

By September of that bad year, as the Czech crisis entered its final phase, Mr. Dafoe was writing frequently:

"I think it probable that leaders in the Free Press (even very long-winded ones) on foreign affairs would be welcomed and read. The public is conscious at last of the crisis and I think it is pretty much convinced that we have been, and are, on the right track. The people will read what we say and believe it too, which adds to our responsibility.

"The editorial that might justly be written at this time is perhaps too hot to print."

He was back at his desk for the last three weeks of the Munich crisis, and left again immediately to rejoin the Commission, having first written one of his most famous leaders, "What's the Cheering For?", which denounced in bitterly truthful language the sham, hypocrisy and evil of the deal which surrendered Czechoslovakia to her enemies. By the end of October, 1938, he knew his hopefulness about last-minute rally of public opinion had been betrayed. He wrote:

"If tomorrow Chamberlain and his gang were thrown from the battlements and a National Government formed embracing all the elements op-

posed to him took office, it could not longer do what could have been done by such a combination a year ago, perhaps even three months ago. The League is at last in ruins, the countries in Europe that would have joined an Anglo-French front are now suitors in the courts of the dictators. France has shown herself craven and irresolute. Russia has withdrawn. The wreckage is complete. . . .

"We had better assume that the people of Britain are going to heed Hitler's warning not to put anyone in office that he does not like—Good God, just think of that!—and on the basis of that try to figure out what our position ought to be, what leadership we ought to offer. We are now confronted with the responsibilities we have brought on our own heads by being a newspaper of opinion in place of always trying to ride idly on the wave of emotional and uninformed feeling."

When Hitler marched into Prague in March, 1939, Mr. Dafoe was still in Ottawa:

"Really the despatches from England are the most sickening yet; the recorded amazement at the discovery that Hitler is a madman, liar, sadist and would-be world conqueror, as though this was the first time they had any grounds for supposing that there was any evidence to support these judgments! Up to date, it seems, any observations along these lines have been by 'war-mongers' and enemies of appeasement. . . .

"I am amused and heartened by two angry editorials directed against the Free Press—in the Montreal Gazette and Saturday Night. . . . It is refreshing after the Free Press has been denounced for three years as a war-monger to find that it is instead pacifist!"

In May, 1939, he ventured into prophecy more detailed than the general affirmation of his conviction that a desperate war was coming:

"I return you Churchill's note. When England gets ready to fight

(perhaps she's ready now) or finds she has no alternative to fighting, I assume she will proclaim her intention to the world by calling Churchill to office (though not necessarily to the premiership) and handing their hats to Chamberlain, (who is under bonds to eat his) and his pals."

His letters all summer reflected his knowledge of the inevitability of war and finally, on September 3, 1939, he wrote from Ottawa:

"I turned out pretty early this morning, walked to the radio, turned it on and heard an English voice say, 'We are now at war.' Except for an hour when I went out to see Crerar I have sat here all day listening to the radio and doing a little work between bulletins, including a sort of outline for a possible leader which I have just sent off by Grant. I'll have to try to give some part of each day to giving you a hand in carrying the load.

"Of course the coming of war will change the burden of carrying the editorial page. Your perplexities as to policy and the timing of its announcement will largely disappear; unless something is done that we simply cannot stand, our business will be to go along with the Government and help them out in every possible way, by explanations, intelligent publicity and so forth. Then of course there will be the news comment and the estimate of the course of events which will be largely guess-work. . . . I fancy we are in for some pretty black weeks and perhaps months. . . . Running a page in wartime is a sweet job and I hope we don't have four years of it this time; I think half of that time would do me in. . . .

"I thought the actual announcement of war would rather knock me out; but it hasn't—as yet anyway. I have been so ashamed of my race, as it has been represented by Chamberlain & Co., that I think a burden that rested somewhere lifted when the sword came out of the scabbard in a good cause. Nearly four years too late."

THE PATH TO DAFOE'S DOOR

BY HAROLD MOORE

THERE may still be doubt whether it was really Emerson who said that if only a man can make a better mouse-trap than his neighbor, though he builds his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door. But the truth in the saying may be found in the path the world beat to the editorial door of John W. Dafoe.

Men of every grade of life, coming from afar or from around the corner, trod that path to that house in the woods, as Winnipeg must have appeared to Mr. Dafoe when first known to him. Some of those who came to see him were in very high places and some were of lowly estate; some were strangers and some had been youth's comrades in the Street of Adventure; but all were alike in the desire to meet and talk with the man they sought.

Some came because they had met him before and others because they bore introductions to him. Some were passing through on missions of state, and stayed to gain his views though they explained they only wanted to pay their respects. And some only wished to get the price of the ticket that would take them farther on, and pleaded old acquaintanceship in the happy craft of newspaperdom to solicit the benefice they knew they would receive.

Persons of consequence and persons of no consequence whatever were equally welcome. Dafoe liked these men to come to him out of some great fondness he had for men. He read in the classics, but he read in men more. Perhaps because he knew them, perhaps because he would crumple stuffed shirts or soothe human hurts, his understanding of people in this unpredictable world was wise and kind.

A mental activity in Dafoe must account for the kinship which existed so naturally between himself and sportsmen. He lived a sedentary life that precluded him from indulging actively in any sport. Yet he exuded a sympathy that made sportsmen find something engaging in a mind that

might seem too high-brow to win their esteem or affection. One of them first told me I should meet Mr. Dafoe. The man who did this was a western contractor who was, I believe, Canada's amateur billiard champion. He had an apartment in the Etoile district of Paris for a part of the war, and during a lunch to which he invited me insisted that I missed a very great deal by not knowing the editor of the Free Press. "But don't you know Jack Dafoe?" my host kept repeating. "You should know him. He's a great fellow, is Jack Dafoe."

I must say that my newspaper knowledge of the editor of the Free Press at that time seemed to indicate a more aloof personage than one whom a host who loved duck hunting fondly addressed as "Jack Dafoe."

Not many years in Winnipeg after that lunch in Paris I discovered what my host in Paris meant when he said "Jack" Dafoe was "a great fellow." I was to meet Mr. Dafoe for the first time when asking for a job on the Free Press at an appointment to be made for a Sunday afternoon, more than twenty years ago.

"But perhaps," he said over the telephone, "you better not come in the afternoon. The elevator won't be running until 6 o'clock and you will have to walk up to the fourth floor. You won't feel like doing that with your bad leg. Instead of you coming to the paper in the afternoon, I'll come down again in the evening, when you can take the elevator up."

I had no idea that the editor of the Free Press knew anything about my bad leg. I certainly would never have expected the slashing editor of the Free Press to put himself about to accommodate me. It was a discovery I made. The conception of the kindness he could show to a stranger, to a newspaperman out of a job; of his consideration for others, never changed in all the years I sat "outside his door." He was a kind man to whom the distressed

ran, and a big, gentle man over whom little children clambered.

"Now," said Lord Northcliffe to me on the train as it pulled out of Fort William, "I don't want there to be any mistake about Dafoe joining me when we get to Winnipeg. I would like him very much to come with me to Australia, but if he cannot do that, I insist that he accompany me as far as Vancouver. Please wire that I cannot go on without him," said the owner of the London Times and Daily Mail, then the greatest of all British newspaper publishers.

Time and again in the years when I "did interviews" for the Free Press I was embarrassed by very great personages passing through Canada saying to me, "Ah, the Manitoba Free Press. When are you Canadians going to appreciate your Mr. Dafoe? If you aren't careful the man who stands head and shoulders above all newspapermen in the British Empire will be admitted for his true worth everywhere but at home."

I had to agree that that might happen fifteen years ago; but fortunately for the self-respect and the perception of Canadians their realization of the full stature and intellectual rank of John W. Dafoe was completely and universally realized by Canadians before they had to be shown it by the rest of the English-speaking world.

Few Canadians got to know quite intimately so many outstanding figures in contemporary affairs overseas as did Mr. Dafoe in more than thirty years. He liked to recall the first imperial press conference, attended by him in London. The oratory was brilliant and prophetic. Lord Rosebery, the prime minister, spoke predictions Dafoe lived to see amazingly confirmed. John Morley delivered himself on journalism from out of the eminence of

his editorship of the Fortnightly Review; and Alfred Milner, still reflecting his pro-consulship in South Africa, awaited, five or six years later, the summons from Lloyd George to unify the Allied High Command in France to wrest victory out of close defeat in the Great War.

Mr. Dafoe took unfeigned pleasure out of the utterances of the intellectuals and in the company of the leaders of men he met. He was at home on their plane. But the imp of humor let him treasure jocular sayings, as for instance remarks by the famous Irish journalist and Nationalist M.P. for the Scotland Road division of Liverpool, "Tay Pay" O'Connor.

At a dinner turned into something of a state occasion, Tay Pay took upon himself to inform his neighbor, Mr. Dafoe, as to the various guests, up and down the table. "An', Dafoe," boomed Tay Pay, "there's Garvin; but ye'll be knowin' Jay Ill Garvin" (for many years editor of the London Observer and biographer of Chamberlain the Elder). "There ye see him, seein' in ivvery German waiter handing the dishes round to us a potinshal spy and an' innimy iv the country!"

Any half hour in which Mr. Dafoe could be got to relate little chapters out of his full life gave glimpses into the great world of thought and action, of high politics and—one is tempted to say—low fun. But if his brow might be "high" in the opinion of many, his fun, or his sense of fun, was never yet said by any man, much less said by any woman, ever to have been "low."

John W. Dafoe was a great figure in the newspaper world of Canada, in the affairs of Canada, in the affairs of the British Commonwealth. He was a very grand, and a very able man to have been privileged to work under and to serve. To have helped a little is still a hope of one of the many, many colleagues to whom he showed much kindness, and was always too lenient.

THE LAST DAY

BY GRANT DEXTER

AT noon last Saturday the Chief waved goodbye. He was going home. The work for the week-end had been put in his brief case. The job for Monday was stacked at one side of his writing table. As a final act he had given me copies of the printed pamphlet of his address of last October for "the boys" in the parliamentary library and the Archives.

He was fit and happy. His mind was as sure and his memory as faultless as always. I had come from Ottawa to talk about the coming session. But as often happened when the subject of discussion was more general than pressing, we had never got to it.

He was the greatest man I have ever known. But unlike most other outstanding men there was nothing complex or baffling about him. The love he inspired in those who were near him—a love which imperceptibly became a kind of adoration—was not evoked by a feeling of perfection in him, nor by any sense that his greatness was due to super-human attributes. He was no enigma. The greatest thing about him was that he seemed no different from other men. He was, indeed, Everyman—but all of them struck out of the good earth and all of them at their very best.

To recall the conversation of Saturday morning may seem unworthy because of its very casualness. But, somehow, it seems right to try and recapture the man himself, not in the formal pose, not in the stress of crisis, but just as he was any day and every day.

He began by talking of books, of how one mislays them and loses them. There was a book on Europe. He had borrowed it from Victor Sifton and had passed it along to whom? An excellent book on the inter-war years. He warmed to the subject and discussed European politics in some detail. He would dip into the past and there would be gleams in the future.

He had been talking the previous day of two books and apparently had intended to lend them to me. But one was lost.

He had no idea where it was. But the other he had brought along. He had found it first shot in his library and he was pleased. He was no good at keeping books in place. He read them and left them lying about. He handed the book to me. I knew it to be a rare one, published thirty years ago and out of print. "I'll be sure to return it, Chief," I said. He looked at me with a twinkle in his eyes—"Don't hurry," he said.

The talk drifted then to quotations. He was no good, he said, at looking up suitable quotations; at writing and then, as it were, icing the cake with sugar plums. The quotations always came to him pat, or not at all. But even when he knew the quotation he wanted, it was often very exasperating trying to find the precise text. For 18 months, at odd moments, he had been on the lookout for a quotation from John Morley. He never could find it but apparently he had still continued the search.

This brought him to the matter of "commonplace" books. When he read a book or an article, he said, he always was on the watch for the lovely phrase. And he had small use for the average index. To be certain, a man should always do his own indexing in pencil in the blank pages at the back and the front. As to the phrases, he would either clip or copy them out and put them in his commonplace book. He had the book beside him and began turning over the pages.

I recalled that in the months at Ottawa on the Sirois commission he had used a cardboard box to store clippings. The top had been fastened down and a slot cut through it. The clippings were thrust down through the slot. Did he clean out the box and store the harvest in the book? Well, he had always intended to do so. That was the idea. But he had never found the time. Actually he was now on his third or fourth box and he had a feeling that one of them had disappeared. Doubtless it would turn up. Perhaps this explained the missing passage from Morley.

He inquired about his friends in Ottawa. First was Mr. P. D. Ross. "'P.D.,' you know, was my boss on the Star in 1885." He told stories about Mr. Ross for a few minutes, all of them revealing affection and admiration for him. One will suffice here. There had been staff trouble one day on the Star and a man had been fired. Whoever did the firing—and it was not Mr. Ross—had shouted at and cursed the man. After it was over, Mr. Ross had remarked: "No one with authority should ever talk to a man in a tone of voice in which the man cannot answer him back." The Chief went on, "I never forgot that lesson."

He spoke of work and of death. He wasn't 77 years of age. Rather, he was almost 78. He had no fear of death. Alex Johnston, of Ottawa, another old friend and now in his eighties, had said to somebody that a man rebels against the thought of dying when in the 40's and the 50's. But the years make plain the plan and at last a man can shut the door without a backward glance. The Chief agreed in a general way. He was afflicted by the thought of friends who had been stricken. He referred to Mr. Rowell, to Mr. Lapointe, to A. K. Maclean, and to others much nearer to him. "The longer I live," he said, "the more impressed I am with the difficulties of getting out of this world." If one could go right on working to the end, it would be all right. But a living death was another thing. It was then he made a reference to R. L. Stevenson.

Mr. Dafoe died as he would have wished—swiftly and with his mind undimmed. His attitude toward death had been made clear in his writing. When he wrote the study of Laurier he turned to it for the closing thought—the passage beginning, "Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail." Sir Wilfrid had played his part out and the falling curtain was the natural end. And when he wrote of Harry Sifton it was to Stevenson that he had gone for the summing up of a life unsurely held but bravely spent—the lines beginning, "Up, up, my soul."

Now came his reference to Stevenson's prose. He quoted from memory, not

exactly but with most of the telling phrases and all of the sense:

"All the world over, and every hour, some one is parting company with all his aches and ecstasies. For us also the trap is laid . . . there is but one conclusion possible: that a man should run the race that is set before him with a single mind . . . All who have meant good work with their whole hearts, have done good work, although they may die before they have the time to sign it . . . And even if death catch people, like an open pitfall, and in mid-career . . . does not life go down with a better grace foaming in full body over a precipice than miserably straggling to an end in sandy deltas?"

"That goes for me," he said.

I quote those lines not so much because of what befell later, but of what followed on in the conversation. The reference began to take on meaning when he spoke of the work he intended to do. There was the daily "chore" on the page but as soon as possible he was going to begin his memoirs. "G.V.F." was off to England and that would "shoot six weeks." He did not think there was time left to him to do a complete job on his memoirs so he planned to take four or five periods of time and write about each one.

The memoirs would keep him busy in 1944. In 1945 he planned to tackle another job. He would revise his constitutional history of Canada, printed serially in the Free Press in 1925, and bring it up to date. Here, again, the purpose was to use the past as an aid in the future, and his mind was equally active on current problems.

It is, of course, hopeless to try and talk of him in the brief space available. He loved people. He believed in the essential goodness and greatness of his fellow men, regardless of their place or position. He knew no class distinctions and was, in his own person, the best example of what he regarded as the distinctive contribution of North America to the world—democracy as a living principle. He wrote of it as, "the germ of the doctrine of equality,"

and developed the point in the first of his Columbia lectures in April, 1934.

In one respect he was widely misunderstood. He greatly influenced the political life of his time but contrary to popular belief—more particularly at Ottawa—he never sought to influence public men directly. He never proffered advice. His views were available to all on the editorial page. The politicians could accept or reject them, as they pleased.

If asked for advice, he would sometimes give it and other times would decline to give it. I never could find out why he gave to one and withheld from another, but I think his answer would have been that he gave only where he thought the request was sincere and where it might bear fruit. I was often astonished by the refusals to men of great place in governments and parties and equally so by the quick and generous response to men of lesser weight.

Nothing surprised me more than the occasion in the winter of 1931-32 when Mr. Bennett stopped the Chief in the entrance hall of the National Research Council and sought advice as to Canada's policy at the Imperial Economic conference to be held six months later: that is, nothing except that the Chief responded in a long considered memorandum some weeks later. The advice was sincerely appreciated but, unfortunately, not acted upon. In passing, it may be added that the policy the Chief advocated 12 years ago is now one of the declared aims of the United Nations.

When he came to Ottawa periodically on visits, he never sought a minister for the purpose of influencing policy. They always sought him and if he was so minded he was adept at arranging lunches or dinners or get-togethers at which no serious conversation was possible. None of the

foregoing, of course, applies to close personal friends who happened to be in politics. Here his advice was always available and his sympathy unflinching. But it would still be true that he never sought to influence them. There was no Big Stick about him.

I write as his Ottawa correspondent for the past 20 years. During most of that time and particularly in the later years I was the main channel of communication between him and political persons at Ottawa. Actually, his influence on national politics was much greater than anyone, not in his confidence, could know. The facts, for obvious reasons, cannot be discussed at this time. But they are of record. There is something tragic in the thought that while his later years will be as an open book, the earlier years—the Union Government crisis in particular—have died with him. What he wrote in his books on Laurier and Sifton in comparison with what he knew is as the shadow to the substance.

His tolerance, like Shakespeare's mercy, was unstrained. He always chided friends who found fault with public men for minor defects of character. If a man, he would argue, is of a liberal mind (a phrase of Gladstone) you must overlook little weaknesses and be thankful that you have him. Differences of view on public issues were never to him an obstacle to warm and continuing friendship. I remember going with him to lunch at Ottawa with a number of prominent Conservatives. As we all entered the Rideau club, the Chief remarked: "We will just leave our dripping swords down here in the hall rack and enjoy ourselves."

Although 77 years past, his race was not yet finished. But saddest of all is the thought: "When great men die much wisdom dies with them."



FAREWELL

By G. V. FERGUSON

WEDNESDAY, January 12, 1944, was a day typical of the Prairie winter, fair, cold and filled with sunshine. The crowds filed into St. Matthew's church, slow, solemn and silent. It was the kind of funeral he would have chosen. He often spoke of such occasions and his great distaste for them. But he must have known there was no way of avoiding some public tribute to his memory for he himself had said to his friends at his anniversary dinner in October that, he was bound to admit that "judged by worldly standards" he had been moderately successful and had "not done too badly in making friends."

Not too badly indeed. The church was full of them, gathered from far and near, and all around were great heaps of flowers from scores of others who could not come. So the occasion had to be a big one, and it was. Its size would not have fretted him for the service had what he would have most hoped for, simplicity. There is nothing more lovely than the Anglican ritual—"We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out..."—and the stately words rolled out into the still corners of the church, read as they had often been before over other men, who now were brothers to him who lay before us. "The days of our age are three-score years and ten; and though men be so strong that they come to fourscore years: yet is their strength then but labour and sorrow; so soon passeth it away, and we are gone."

A hymn or two, a little music; and presently we found ourselves beside the open grave, the bare branches of the Elmwood trees as quiet as we were; the sun setting fast, as though in haste to leave Winnipeg alone to bid farewell to her greatest citizen. "I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write. From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: even so saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours." So we left him and we felt cold and lonely, for it was as if a great fire that had cheered us so greatly for so long had

gone out; and we knew that for all of us the world would never be the same again.

This mood of weakness which all felt yesterday will pass, for the wellsprings of human strength quickly flow again to restore the awful devastation caused by death. If it were not so there could be no life. And the example of the man himself, itself brings strength, for there was no calamity, no grief, too great for him to carry. He bent his massive shoulders to the new burden and, saying little, pursued whatever course he had marked out. He seldom showed emotion. He kept it to himself and wrestled with it until he was its master. Only much later was he prepared, sometimes, to write of what he felt.

One recalls the sheet of paper preserved by one of his colleagues now also dead, on which he had scribbled some half a dozen headings. Below them, in another hand, are written these words: "Notes for the editorial on Harry Sifton which the chief found he could not write." It was a full two weeks later that he turned his pen to the task and its closing paragraphs with slight amendment stand today as a monument to himself:

"Long ago the ideal community and citizens worthy of it were limned with words which are as modern as today:

"We are lovers of beauty without extravagance and lovers of wisdom without unmanliness. Wealth to us is not mere material for vainglory but an opportunity for achievement; and poverty we think it no disgrace to acknowledge but a real degradation to make no effort to overcome. Our citizens attend to both public and private duties and do not allow absorption in their own various affairs to interfere with their knowledge of the city's. We regard the man who holds aloof from public life not as "quiet" but as useless; we decide or debate, carefully and in person, all matters of policy, holding, not that words and deeds go all to-

gether, but that acts are foredoomed to failure when undertaken undiscussed. For we are noted for being at once most adventurous in action and most reflective beforehand.

"For the citizens of this commonwealth, who gave to it the last full measure of devotion he bespoke 'the grandest of all sepulchres, not that in which their mortal bones are laid, but a home in the minds of men, where their glory remains fresh to stir to speech or action as the occasion comes by.'

"Pericles had in mind the men who died for Athens in the field; but the words may very justly apply to all who have given to such a state as he described the services of

citizenship which he defined. 'Life may be given in many ways; and loyalty to truth may be sealed as bravely in the closet as the field.'"

We may justly think of John W. Dafoe as a practitioner of the noblest civic virtues, a warrior for the common good, who has fallen asleep and has henceforth a home in the minds of his countrymen "to stir them to speech and to action." He will be linked in our memories with the men who hold their right by their sacrifices in the field at the call of their country and in the services of humanity to what Pericles calls "the grandest of all sepulchres."

JOURNEY'S END

*Text of a Broadcast Written by J. H. Gray and Delivered Over CKRC,
Sunday, January 9th, 1944.*

On Saturday afternoon, John W. Dafoe cleared his desk of an assortment of newspapers and newspaper clippings. As he had been doing Saturday afternoons for 42 years, he piled his clippings and files in a large leather brief-case and went home for a quiet week-end of reading. On Sunday morning he awoke with a sharp pain in his side. The doctor was called and ordered him removed to the hospital. Quietly, in an ambulance en route to the Winnipeg General hospital, late Sunday afternoon, death came for the man acknowledged the world over as one of the greatest editors of our time. By five o'clock, the news agencies were carrying the report of his death to wherever newspapers are published.

Last October, the Winnipeg Press Club honored Mr. Dafoe with a testimonial dinner on the 60th anniversary of his entry into Canadian journalism. In that 60 years this shaggy, giant of a man built his paper into a great Canadian institution; in that time, too, he played a great role in the building of a Canadian nation on the northern half of this continent.

The editor of the Free Press was born on March 8, 1866, in the village of Combermere, Ont. At 17, he went to work for the Montreal Star as a cub editor for \$6 a week. When he got his chance as a reporter he did so well at it that he was sent to Ottawa as the parliamentary correspondent of the Star in 1884.

He served in the Press Gallery during two sessions and, in 1885, while still ineligible to vote, he became the editor of a new paper in Ottawa—the Journal. However, he stayed there but a few months and in 1886 came west to Winnipeg as a reporter on the old Manitoba Free Press. By 1892 his foot began to itch again and back he went to Montreal to the editor's chair on the Gazette. In 1895 Lord Athelstan lured him back to the Star, where he took charge of its weekly edition.

Politics was the bread and butter of John Dafoe's life, but he had no scope in which to exercise his talent as a political journalist on the weekly Star. When Sir Clifford Sifton offered him a chance to edit the Manitoba Free Press, he quickly accepted and moved west again in 1901.

Thereafter, until Sunday afternoon, he saw history in the making—in Winnipeg; in Manitoba; in Canada, and in the world. And always he had a hand in the history that was made.

With Sir Robert Borden, he was one of the great architects of the Canadian nation, for he went to the Peace Conference with Sir Robert at the close of the last Great War. He was one of the drafters of the memorandum which demanded, and got, for Canada a separate voice in the councils of the world. In Paris, he covered the Peace Conference for the Free Press and found time to mingle with the statesmen of the world and to know them and to know what they thought.

The foundation for Canadian nationhood was laid at the Peace Conference in Paris. But something more is required to build a nation. It requires a national unity, a national purpose, a sense of national being. He came home from the Peace Conference to help erect the edifice upon the foundation. Thereafter, for 24 years, he devoted himself to that task.

He sought to provide Canada with the framework for nationhood by constitutional reform. Within and upon that framework he sought to create a national life which would allow Canadians to live out their lives in comfort, in security and, above all, in peace. Thus in the years between 1937 and 1939 he could devote but little time to the job he loved best, being editor of the Free Press. As a member of the Rowell-Sirois Commission on Dominion-Provincial relations, he travelled from one end of the country to the other in search of a formula for a better Canada. The formula was found, but it has not yet been used.

Perhaps more than any other Canadian he realized that there could be no peace for Canadians without world peace. From the time of the first Japanese attack on Manchuria, in 1931, until today, he crusaded unceasingly for collective security. In Canada, his was one of the few voices that cried out in anguish against Munich. When this war came at last, as he had pre-

dicted it would come, he threw himself into it with complete disregard for his own health and welfare. At the age when most men begin to think of relaxing, he worked harder than he had ever worked before. The heart which had carried him through 60 years of journalism gave out on Sunday.

The editor of the Free Press is dead.

NOTES ON A FULL LIFE

*Taken from a Biographical Sketch of John W. Daffoe in
the Winnipeg Free Press January 10th, 1944*

JOHN Wesley Daffoe, editor-in-chief of the Winnipeg Free Press and chancellor of the University of Manitoba, died suddenly Sunday afternoon (9 January, 1944), the result of a heart attack suffered on his way to the Winnipeg General hospital. He was 77 years old. Dean of Canadian journalism, the recipient of honorary degrees from Manitoba, Queens, Alberta and Columbia universities, famed far beyond the borders of Canada, Mr. Daffoe was at his desk Saturday as usual and in good health. His illness lasted only a matter of hours.

Mr. Daffoe began his newspaper career in 1883 on the Montreal Star. He was the first editor of the Ottawa Journal, but in 1886 came to Winnipeg and joined the Manitoba Free Press, as this newspaper was then known. From 1892 to 1901 he was editor of the Montreal Herald, but in the latter year accepted an invitation of the late Sir Clifford Sifton to become editor-in-chief of the Free Press, the post he had held ever since.

Mr. Daffoe lived at 1325 Wellington Crescent, and is survived by his wife, four daughters, Mary, Dorothy, Marcella, and Elizabeth all of Winnipeg; three sons, Edwin and John G. of Winnipeg, and Van serving in Italy with the P.P.C.L.I.; two brothers, Calvin of Killarney, Man., R. G. of Winnipeg, and one sister, Mrs. T. Emerson of Vancouver, B.C.

Also surviving are eight grandchildren, Joan, Mary Elizabeth, John, Michael, Peter, Brenda, Christopher and Jennifer, all of Winnipeg; and three nieces, Mrs. Alice Price, Mrs. Murray Ward, and Mrs. F. Robert Smith, all of Winnipeg.

It could fairly be claimed for John Daffoe that he was the greatest journalist that Canada produced during her history. He was a master of a lucid and vigorous style

of writing, which he reinforced with a unique gift for phrase-making and a pungent wit. He had an unrivalled knowledge of the complicated problems of Canada's political and economic life and with the aid of his prodigious memory could often recount at a moment's notice their whole history to combat the argument of some opponent or to support a plea for a satisfactory solution.

For more than fifty years he had enjoyed personal contacts with all the leading figures in the public life of Canada and with many of them had been on terms of close intimacy. He was, therefore, peculiarly equipped to pronounce judgment and give enlightened guidance on all manner of domestic and international problems, and his editorial writings commanded an authority which was unsurpassed as a moulding force in public opinion throughout Canada. In his outlook not merely upon politics but upon every phase of life, he was a genuine Liberal of the same intellectual breed as C. P. Scott of the Manchester Guardian, who for so many years occupied a unique place in the journalistic and public life of Britain. With him, Liberalism meant not a policy but a habit of mind, and he had the disposition to look upon each of his fellows as of equal worth with himself.

Always admitting that natural obstacles to complete human equality would continue to exist, he regarded as peculiarly obnoxious all artificial privileges and conditions which prevented or hindered the growth and self-expression of the individual, and upon class distinctions in society, privileges of rank, wealth, sex, or creed, which he felt to be weights and impediments, he waged unremitting war with his pen. He held it to be a fundamental objective not to deprive any individual of the opportunities which he required for the exercise of his natural powers but to pre-

vent the excessive usurpation of such opportunities by privileged classes and groups.

If ever a man was a social human being he was John Dafoe, and the form of diversion which gave him his happiest hours was a long evening spent in high converse with a small group of congenial friends. In an age when good talk has almost become a lost art, he was one of the best talkers and happily he liked to exercise his gift. Not that he ever tried to assert himself or to dominate a gathering as some who pride themselves on their conversational powers are apt to do, but there flowed from his lips a current of intellectual vigour, flavored with informed knowledge and keen wit which automatically gave him dominance.

He had a fine sense of all the nuances of the English tongue and in his talk there was no trace of sloppiness and cheap slang. Moreover, his range of knowledge was enormous and he could discourse with equal freedom and enjoyment upon the early politics of Manitoba, the merits of Joseph Chamberlain and Clemenceau as statesmen, the foibles of bygone Canadian politicians, the future of the grain trade or Socialism, the virtues of Thomas Hardy or Willa Cather as novelists, some cause celebre in Britain or the influence of the "movies" upon morals.

His sense of humor was infinite and there was often displayed in it a vein of gusty Rabelaisianism, sometimes rather shocking the ultra-righteous who encountered it. He could always see the funny side of things even at his own expense and the light-hearted gaiety with which he would review the events of some stricken political field and the causes of the debacle was often distressing to serious-minded partisans on his own side. He was a born raconteur and anyone who could manage to tap the rich store of tales and anecdotes which he possessed about men and affairs in many lands and climes was sure of a varied feast. Like all good raconteurs he himself dearly loved a good story and if it found favor with him his whole frame would shake with hearty laughter and the sort of chuckles for which the late President Taft was famed would fill the room.

John Dafoe was always ready to lend a hand to a young journalist of promise, and there must be scores of men and women engaged in newspaper work in Canada who will bear grateful witness to the encouragement given them by the discriminating approbation and wise counsel of the editor of the Winnipeg Free Press.

As an editor he had many merits, but not the least was his unflinching championship of his subordinates against any unjust complaints or accusations; he was ready to visit with severe strictures any errors in reporting, which were proved to be misrepresentations of a case or even calculated to do harm to individuals or corporations, but any complainant who had no genuine grievance and or had trumped up one to wreak vengeance upon a reporter, received short shrift if he ventured to enter the editorial sanctum.

No journalist that ever lived was prouder of his profession and he would never willingly have exchanged it for any other. It enabled him to make a notable contribution not merely to the life of the prairie provinces of Canada but to the whole Dominion of Canada and the British Commonwealth and they are the poorer for his loss. When a man like John Dafoe is removed from the scene of his labors, he leaves a gap that is not easily filled, but the memory of his fine intellect, his rich and attractive personality and his devotion to every good cause should be an inspiration to those now called upon to take up the torch which has fallen from his hands.

Mr. Dafoe's first forebear on the North American continent was a Flemish emigrant who settled in what is now the state of New York about the middle of the seventeenth century and spelt his name Deffaux. In America the name, in common with others, experienced a transformation and when some of the family, unwilling to accept the results of the War of Independence, moved about 1784 into the northern wilderness where the British flag still flew, it appeared on the Loyalist roll in three different spellings. One of three emigres, who had Anglicized the name to Dafoe belonged to a contingent of Loyalists who were allocated lands in Prince Edward County at the eastern end.

of Lake Ontario; he settled on a farm near Adolphustown and in that vicinity two generations of the family experienced all the vicissitudes of pioneer life.

Apparently they gradually struggled through to reasonable prosperity, but migratory habits were in the blood and about the year 1860 Calvin Dafoe, a grandson of the Loyalist, trekked northward to the Ottawa Valley which was then in process of being denuded of its mighty forests of pine and offered a prospect of cheap virgin land. Soon after he took up his new farm Calvin Dafoe had induced a young English girl, the daughter of English emigrants from Kent, to share his fortunes; and it was on March 8, 1866, that their eldest son was born in a modest log farmstead near Combermere in the central Ontario highlands not far from Ottawa.

In the Dafoe home there was always a sort of rude plenty, but at the best life on a bush farm was hard and comfortless and ready cash was always hard to come by and scarce.

John Dafoe got more schooling at cutting cordwood and herding cattle than at books, but his mother, who was both a stronger character and better educated person than her husband, had a lively intelligence, cultivated by a love of books, and she had aspirations for her firstborn to have a richer experience of life than the farm at Combermere could ever offer. So she got him for some years to the high school at Arnprior, where he had the luck to come under some able teachers and to profit by their instruction; she also bought books with what scanty cash she could scrape up and encouraged him to read and to dream of some other career than burning stumps and milking cows. Between John Dafoe and his mother there was a deep bond of attachment which was only severed by her death, and it was by her advice and with her blessing that at the age of seventeen he decided to leave the farm and seek his fortune in a wider sphere. Montreal in those days could scarcely boast of 100,000 inhabitants but it appeared to the denizens of Combermere as a great metropolis and it was the mecca of all the ambitious youth of the Ottawa Valley.

The story of his entry into the newspaper world can best be told in his own words, as he recounted the incident at the dinner held by the Winnipeg Press club in his honor last October to celebrate his completion of 60 years of journalism:

"I was going to high school in an Ontario town when the incredible thing happened. In the twinkling of an eye I was transferred from the desk of the high school to become a member of the editorial staff of the Montreal Star. There was not one chance in ten thousand that the average hard-boiled editor would do what the editor of the Montreal Star did in that connection. His name was E. G. O'Connor. He was a prince of a man, a man of wide sensibilities and ideas; and it occurred to him in February, 1883, to put in the Weekly Star (the Family Herald and Weekly Star which you country boys—I suppose there are lots of them here—have seen) a statement that there was an opening on the Star for a young man of high ambitions. Well, I sat down and wrote forthwith. I got a come-on letter saying that he would give me a trial, and before he knew it I was walking into his office. I climbed on the first train; I arrived late at night in Montreal at the Quebec Gate station; went to an hotel, and early in the morning I walked into the Star office.

"The Star was not then the great paper that it is now. It had very humble quarters. I walked up a high stairway of a building on Craig street into a room where a lot of young men were working very vigorously, supervised by a city editor who was one of the best in the business that I ever knew; and from there I went into another room where there were four desks, the editors were at work. In a front corner room I found Mr. O'Connor. I told him who I was, and he looked at me a little surprised; and he puzzled for a while. Yes, he said, we will give you a trial. You do not know the city very well; we will give you some inside work. So in place of being a cub reporter I became a cub editor at six dollars a week.

"Mr. O'Connor and I became the most intimate of friends in after years, and I asked him once why he had not thrown me into the battle outside. Well, if you must know, he said, it was because I thought

you were a little too green. Being green, having an air of rusticity, was one of the fortunate things—one of the things that my star dictated. Opportunity is half the battle of life. 'Master of human destinies am I,' as the well-known poem has it. If you do not get started right and have ten years to make up, sometimes you never get really started; but I had opportunity knocking at my door, and all I can say is this—that I went out and grabbed her immediately and acted forthwith. You all know me for a very shy, retiring and timid man, and when I look back at my youth I wonder where I got the gall I had then and where I lost it."

John Dafoe learnt his business thoroughly, worked hard and made no mistakes and within a year had convinced his editor that he was a youth of uncommon gifts and quality and by all odds his best reporter. So early in the year 1884 he was sent to Ottawa as the parliamentary correspondent for the Star; it opened up a new sphere of work to him and another advantage was that he was near home and could often see his family. He fully justified his selection as the Star's representative at Ottawa and acquired a familiarity with the workings of the parliamentary machine which was then under the skilful control of Sir John A. Macdonald.

Mr. Dafoe came of Tory stock. His conversion to Liberalism can again be best told in the words he used at the anniversary dinner:

"At this time I will have to give a little political information. It is true that the township from which I came, up in the backwoods, was not a township which in after years would have put up a monument to me for my later political views. I think that with outsiders voting (in those days outsiders could vote), the Grit candidate might get five or six votes in the township. The rest of them were Orange Tory, and they voted for Mackenzie Bowell, who was the Grand Master of the Orange Order, and later Prime Minister of Canada. That was the atmosphere from which I came; although, of course, a youth of seventeen does not have any set politics."

"The opening of Parliament came, and one day I climbed the stairway of the old Parliament building, which has since vanished from the face of the earth, burned up during the last war. The two hundred and fifteen members of that Commons have also disappeared, with one notable exception—Sir William Mulock, now in his hundredth year, survives. The debate on the address from the throne proceeded. I went up that stairway perhaps not much interested in politics, and I came down a fighting Grit; and the man who converted me was a gentleman by the name of Edward Blake, so I got my doctrine at headquarters.

"I had heard preachers and revivalists who came around at intervals, but the idea that one could do with the English language what Edward Blake did that night swept me off my feet. Sir John made a reply to Blake—a very neat reply. He did not have to argue—he had sixty of a majority. It was not necessary for him to make an argument. He turned about and talked to his supporters, who wildly cheered him. Up in the press gallery the youngster decided to put his money on the other side."

His abilities in the press gallery were noted by some local Ottawa politicians who were intent upon founding a newspaper and they induced him in 1885 to assume charge of the Ottawa Journal. But the owners had inadequate financial resources, the young journalist was rather too inexperienced for an editorial chair, and finding the going hard and realizing that he had assumed too heavy responsibilities he resigned within a year.

The Dafoe family had had it in mind to go west. John Dafoe had already been in touch with the Manitoba Free Press which had wanted his services. He came to Manitoba, took up a homestead for his father in the Killarney district, and the family soon followed on. Meanwhile the young journalist began his Winnipeg career under the tutelage of W. F. Luxton, founder and editor of the then Manitoba Free Press.

Although Mr. Dafoe's service with the Free Press was not continuous from 1886

to 1944, the earlier year is the landmark to be noted by all those who recognize how early and how deeply his roots went down into western soil, not least that part of it which is the newspaper he honored with his presence. Under Luxton, an able Englishman with a real flair for journalism, Dafoe got a very varied and useful experience and served as a sort of jack-of-all-trades upon the paper.

For one session he acted as its parliamentary correspondent at Ottawa, and during its course he wooed and won the lady who was to be his life partner. Miss Alice Parmelee belonged to a family well known in the eastern townships of Quebec, and her father, the late W. G. Parmelee, was, as deputy minister of trade and commerce, a distinguished civil servant. From the day he met her John Dafoe had settled in his mind that she was his destined mate, and it was a love match of the truest kind. They were married in 1890 and settled down in Winnipeg.

In 1892 Dafoe was lured back east by an offer of the editorship of the Montreal Herald, the paper which was then the mouthpiece of the Protestant Liberals of Quebec, and when he accepted it he found himself in the thick of the struggles, which culminated in the great Conservative debacle of 1896. He went east thoroughly versed in the baffling intricacies of the Manitoba school question, which was then assuming importance, and was destined to become the dominant issue of the next general election. Inevitably Dafoe's knowledge of the Manitoba situation brought him into contact with the strategists of the Liberal party, and, as he discloses in his little book "Laurier: A Study in Canadian Politics," he was the instrument of a move on the political chessboard which had a decisive effect upon the fortunes of the long conflict.

Laurier, as leader of the Liberal party, had received a minatory letter from Father Lacombe, the famous Jesuit missionary, whose devoted labors made his name a household word in the west, but who was a perfervid champion of his co-religionists in Manitoba and therefore a keen opponent of the Liberal policy. In his letter he wrote to Laurier, as follows:

"If the government is beaten . . . I inform you with regret that the episcopacy like one man united with the clergy will rise to support those who may have fallen in defending us."

Laurier was averse to publishing this letter, but Dafoe, realizing how this threat of episcopal vengeance would inflame the Protestants of Ontario and other provinces, strongly counselled publication. He narrates that it was by a calculated indiscretion of the Liberal board of strategy that he was enabled to publish this fateful letter and as he had predicted, the effect was very damaging to the Conservative party.

By 1895 John Dafoe had secured an established position as one of the most competent journalistic exponents of the Liberal faith, but by this time he had a growing family to think of, and when his old employer, Lord Atholstan, offered him what was then a handsome salary to take charge of the weekly edition of the Star, he accepted it. He made the Weekly Star a very readable and interesting paper, but although no restraint was placed upon his outside activities as a member of the Liberal party, he was more or less condemned to political neutrality in its pages and this irked him. However, in the year 1901 the opportunity for his real life work was suddenly opened up.

Sir Clifford Sifton, as minister of the interior, had become one of the leading figures of the Laurier ministry, and the successful application of his policy of colonization to the west had enormously added to its prestige. In the cabinet he was recognized as the leader of western Liberalism and for the purpose of strengthening his influence and promoting the fortunes of his party, he had in 1898 acquired the Manitoba Free Press. When Sir Clifford Sifton decided that he must make a change in the editorship, his mind turned at once to the able young journalist who was in charge of the Montreal weekly. Sifton knew the important part which Dafoe had played in the campaign of 1896, and, being aware that he was sympathetic to his own political ideas, felt that he would make an admirable editor for the Manitoba Free Press. So he offered Dafoe the editorship

and was greatly gratified when the offer was accepted.

Thus it befell that John Dafeo in the summer of 1901 found himself back in Winnipeg in charge of the leading paper of Western Canada. At that time Manitoba had made a brave start towards escape from the years of stagnant depression which had followed the collapse of the boom of the early eighties, and the process of transforming the prairie wilderness of the northwest territories into fertile tilth was well under way. It had become plain that the Canadian prairies were destined to become the home of a prosperous community of the human race, and in the moulding of its future its newspapers would obviously play a great part. So there came to John Dafeo at the age of thirty-six such an opportunity as has rarely fallen to the lot of a young journalist.

John Dafeo had just left behind the springtime of life when he moved his lares and penates to Winnipeg in the summer of 1901. To the happy union which had been begun eleven years before five children had already been born and he brought back with him to the west a lively troop of children. The Free Press was at the time of his assumption of the editorial chair still located in somewhat primitive quarters on McDermot avenue, but shortly after his arrival it migrated to more commodious quarters at the corner of Portage avenue and Garry street.

Under Dafeo's editorial charge the paper gained steadily in character and influence and it gradually came to be recognized as the leading newspaper of Western Canada, and one of the formative influences in moulding public opinion throughout the Dominion.

Some interludes broadened his horizon. In the year 1906 he attended the Commercial Congress of the Empire in London and made his first acquaintance with the British Isles. Three years later he was chosen a member of the Canadian delegation to the Imperial Press conference which was held in London, and there he made his debut as an orator and first attracted the attention of discerning people in the outer world. So the years rolled by and John Dafeo, happy in his family life,

absorbed in congenial work and living in as interesting a place as the world could show at that epoch, had reason to envy no man.

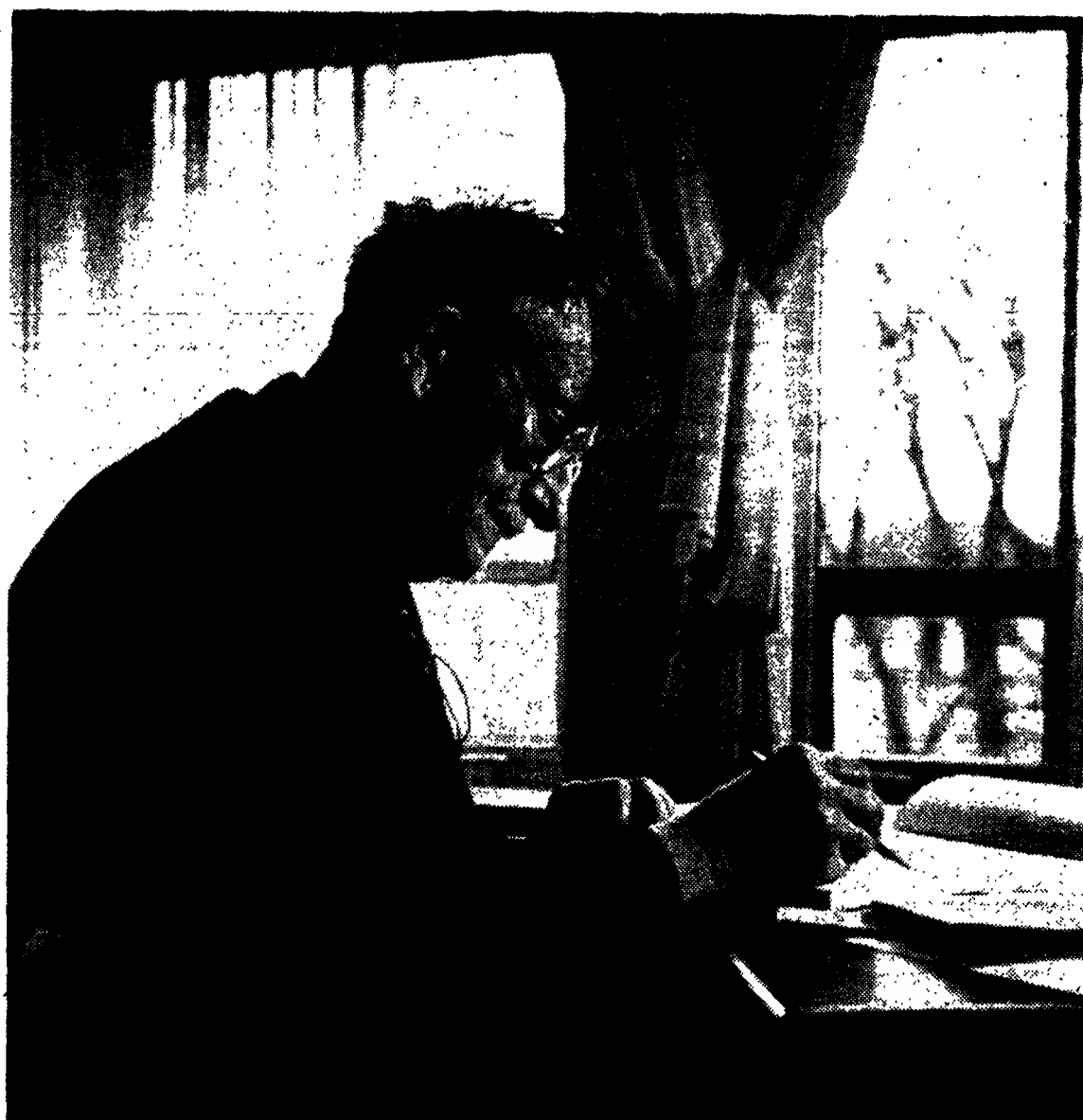
Then, in the year of 1911, there suddenly loomed up the great battle over Reciprocity with the United States. The Laurier ministry, faced with a threat of political insurgency in the west, had entered into negotiations with the administration of President Taft which was then in power at Washington and had succeeded in concluding a commercial treaty whose basic features were provisions for reciprocal free trade or very low duties for the natural products of the two countries.

Dafeo had never for a moment entertained any doubts about the beneficial possibilities of the treaty for Canada and particularly for the prairie provinces, but his friend and employer, Sir Clifford Sifton, took an altogether different view. As soon as Sifton's attitude was known, there was naturally considerable speculation about the policy which the Free Press would adopt. But it was soon set at rest.

Sifton knew well that Dafeo was a firm believer in the desirability of reciprocity with the United States, and that if he were asked to employ his pen in fighting the pact he would promptly tender his resignation. He, moreover, respected Dafeo's views as based on sincere intellectual conviction and he never made any attempt to convert him to his own.

Never for a moment was there any breach in the friendly relations of the pair. They simply agreed to differ on the chief issue of the day and go their respective roads, and there resulted the almost unique spectacle of a great paper vigorously advocating a policy for whose defeat its proprietor was exerting all his energies. It was widely commented on as an episode which was wholly creditable to both parties.

After the fight was over Dafeo did not fail to keep a watchful eye upon the performances of the new government at Ottawa, but for the next three years he was mainly occupied with provincial politics. The Conservative administration, headed by Sir Rodmond Roblin, which had been ruling the roost in Manitoba since 1899,



had developed many reprehensible characteristics and was brazenly running the provinces in the interests of a clique of somewhat flyblown politicians and their friends.

Dafoe's long campaign against the Roblin ministry at last began to bear fruit in a marked change of public sentiment, and although this diverting administration, whose follies and corruptions John Dafoe took an immense zest in exposing, managed to scrape through another provincial election by the skin of its teeth in July, 1914, it was obviously in a battered and decrepit plight, when suddenly the thundercloud of the Great War blew up to reduce all local political squabbles to insignificance.

Dafoe was cautious about committing the Free Press to support of a war policy for the British Commonwealth, but after Lord Grey's speech in the British House of Commons had made the case for British intervention clear, and carried with him both the British Parliament and people except for an inconsequential minority, Dafoe lost no time in ranging the Free Press on the same side. He supported the Borden Ministry's policy of despatching immediately a Canadian contingent and putting all the country's resources into the common cause, and he urged the leaders of the Liberal party to give their cordial co-operation to the Government in its war measures.

Meanwhile as the war proceeded there were kaleidoscopic developments in the domestic situation in Manitoba which he could not neglect; within a year after the outbreak of war exposure of the scandals in connection with the parliament buildings of Manitoba had given the coup de grace to the derelict Roblin ministry with the result that it resigned, and a Liberal administration, headed by T. C. Norris, took its place. Dafoe exerted himself strenuously to see that it got a satisfactory mandate from the voters at the general election which followed in the province, and then he felt free to devote himself to the engrossing problems of the war.

As the bloody struggle dragged out its weary length without sign of an early termination, there gradually loomed up a crisis in Canadian politics in which John Dafoe came to play a major part. A general election was due in the fall of 1916

through the effluxion of the statutory life of the existing parliament, and the Liberal party had to decide between consenting to an extension of the life of Parliament which the Government wanted, or the forcing of an election. Dafoe made up his mind that a partisan conflict in Canada while the issue of war still hung in the balance was undesirable, and was bound to have unfortunate consequences not merely for the Liberal party but for the national war effort, and when Sir Wilfrid Laurier took the same view he strongly supported his attitude. But as the year 1916 dragged out its weary length and there was no sign of an early termination of the bloody struggle in Europe, it became plain that the supply of volunteer recruits in Canada had been reduced to such a thin stream that only by the adoption of conscription could the fighting strength of the battalions in France be maintained.

So in the fall of 1917 Dafoe, after a careful investigation of the recruiting situation, made up his mind that conscription was necessary and became a strenuous advocate of it. His lead was followed by other Liberal papers and the question rapidly became a live issue.

At first the Borden government and the ministerial press were just as hostile to the idea as were Sir Wilfrid Laurier and most of his lieutenants, but public opinion, at least outside of Quebec, took the view of the Free Press and its allies and helped the pressure of events to convert the government.

The entry into war of the United States, which could not have successfully enforced conscription within its bounds unless Canada was pursuing a similar policy, forced the issue, and by this time it had also become clear that the passage of a conscription bill could only be accomplished by some sort of National Government.

So in 1917 Sir Robert Borden invited Sir Wilfrid Laurier to join in the formation of a National ministry for the purpose of putting into effect a policy of conscription. Laurier gave the proposal careful consideration but eventually rejected it; Dafoe in his little book "Laurier; A Study in Canadian Politics," advanced the theory that a fear of losing his hitherto unchallenged position as the idol of the French-Canadian

people played a large part in his decision. Anyhow, Laurier rejected the offer and proceeded with his plans for a general election in confident anticipation of a party victory over a government which had made many enemies and lost its popularity.

Meanwhile the movement for a non-partisan National Government developed apace in the English-speaking provinces, and Sir Robert Borden, finding that a number of leading Liberals were ready to co-operate with him, made overtures to them; but it was obvious that no National government could have real strength unless it had a substantial backing from western Liberalism, and that its leaders held the fate of the project in their hands. Thereupon Dafoe began to employ all his editorial skill to induce the western Liberals to support the idea of the Union Government and contribute representatives to it. But the division of opinion among the western Liberals was so acute that it was decided to hold a special convention of the western Liberals in Winnipeg to discuss the situation. It opened on Aug. 7, 1917, with about a thousand delegates present, and represented the cream of western Liberalism.

While it sat Dafoe pleaded in the columns of the Free Press with enthusiasm for the idea of a National Government, but the sentimental affection which most of the delegates held for Laurier carried the day and in the end the convention reached a compromise decision by resolution which expressed severe disapproval of the war administration of the Borden ministry, pledged its support to all reasonable measures necessary for the successful prosecution of the war, and recorded its admiration of the life and work of Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

Dafoe was naturally greatly disappointed at the unsatisfactory result of this convention but did not waver in his belief that some sort of National Government was inevitable. By this time had emerged a definite schism in the Liberal party, and the leaders of the conscription section kept in touch with Sir Robert Borden; they also maintained relations with Laurier and carried on negotiations with him. Dafoe had become one of the acknowledged leaders of the Liberal conscriptionists, and at this

time was making constant pilgrimages to Ottawa. He was generally credited with the authorship of a proposal that Laurier should co-operate in the formation of a National government and should engage, if it was returned to power, to resort to conscription if voluntary recruiting did not reach a stipulated level.

When Dafoe found Laurier immovable in his opposition to conscription and the Union Government he proceeded to burn his boats and exert his influence to securing Liberal support for a Union ministry. By the fall of 1917 Dafoe's efforts had helped to drive leaders of western Liberalism, like Messrs. Arthur Sifton, J. A. Calder and T. A. Crerar, into the arms of Sir Robert Borden, and the Union government had become an accomplished fact.

With the breaking of the German military machine in 1918, peace had to be made and Canada was expected to send representatives to the council board at Paris. By this time Sir Robert Borden not merely had formed a high appreciation of Dafoe's journalistic abilities and political influence which had made a great contribution to the success and stability of the Union government, but had also come to hold in high esteem his powers of real statesmanship and to sympathize with his views about Canada's political status.

So, while he managed the official personnel of the Canadian delegation which he led to Paris with cabinet colleagues, he took along John Dafoe in the role of representative of the Canadian Press. But throughout the whole progress of the Peace conference he treated him as his intimate and trusted counsellor and took no important step without seeking his opinion.

Dafoe found Sir Robert Borden completely sympathetic with his views and had a hand in the preparation of the notable memorandum which embodied the demand of Canada and other dominions for separate representation at the peace conference and, as a corollary, on the projected League of Nations. It is an open secret that the demand was only conceded with great reluctance on the part of the British foreign office and in face of, as Mr. Arthur Sifton explained subsequently, the determined resistance of the more con-

servative elements in Britain headed by the Marquess Curzon, but conceded it was, and Dafoe had the congenial task of explaining to the Canadian public the very momentous consequences of the change.

Dafoe found great favor in the eyes of Lloyd George, never slow to discern real ability, and towards the close of the conference, possibly on the suggestion of Sir Robert Borden, was offered a knighthood by the British premier. "What would I do with a knighthood? I sweep my own snow and mind my own furnace," was the reply of the stout democrat and inveterate contemner of the frills and furbelows of artificial rank. But one last human fruit of the conference for Dafoe was the firm consolidation of his friendship with Sir Robert Borden.

Dafoe had had a personal interest in the war, for two of his sons had been fighting in the ranks of the Canadian army, but the anxieties which he shared with millions of parents throughout the world were happily ended by their safe return. Impelled, however, by this personal interest, he found time during his stay in Paris to make a hurried pilgrimage over the battlefields where his sons and their comrades had been risking their lives a few short months before, and at the request of his friends he subsequently embodied in a little book entitled "Over the Canadian Battlefields" the articles which he contributed to the Manitoba Free Press. It contains some of the finest writing that ever flowed from his pen, and passages are worthy of quotation:

"If the dead gave their lives without bitterness and the living are consoled, Canada, the common mother of both, is richer for all time for their sacrifice. In the life of the race a single generation passes like a heart-beat; but the chosen few from this generation, whose names are in the lists of the lost, are secure in their fame and in their power. They have set for all time for Canada the standards of service and of sacrifice; their example will, now and forever, sweeten our civic life and if the occasion calls will nerve the youth of Canada to emulate their deeds on the stricken field. A thousand years from now Canadian youths will read the story of

their deeds with hearts uplifted and with kindling eyes. Safe in such an immortality, what matters it that they sleep far from Canada upon the battlefields of France!"

Dafoe continued to support the Union government, but when the breakdown of Sir Robert Borden's health compelled first a long holiday and then his final retirement from public life in July, 1920, and Mr. Meighen on succeeding to the premiership reorganized the ministry on a purely Tory basis, making the Liberals who remained in it accept the Conservative badge, Dafoe soon afterwards proclaimed the resumption of his paper's independence and promised the new administration nothing more than a fair field.

For Mr. Meighen's parliamentary abilities and personal qualities Dafoe had a deep admiration and always held the view that no abler Canadian brain in his generation had devoted itself to public life. But the new premier had an incompetent and reactionary team in his cabinet, and Dafoe soon found himself wielding an incisively critical pen about its errors and misdeeds.

However, the vendetta which the Laurier Liberals continued to wage against all their brethren who had been infected with the taint of Unionism outraged his sense of fairness and convinced him that their leaders were too foolish to be entrusted with office. So the files of the Free Press, from July, 1920, onwards reveal him as for the moment politically homeless and dealing forth impartial douches of criticism to both the government and the official opposition. He, however, gave cordial commendation to Mr. Meighen for his part at the Imperial conference of 1921 in securing the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

Dafoe had watched with interest and encouraged the secession of a small band of western supporters of the Union government, who had taken their places on the right hand of the Speaker and begun, under the leadership of the Hon. T. A. Crerar, to function as an independent group advocating progressive measures of different kinds.

Dafoe had arrived at the conclusion that the upheaval created by the Great War had made drastic readjustments of the economic structure of society inevitable, and so when under the impulse of the post-war agricultural depression there developed a real political insurgency in the prairie provinces, which had large bodies of sympathizers in other parts of Canada, he gave judicious support to the Progressive party, which, under the captaincy of the Hon. T. A. Crerar, took the field in the general election of 1921. Dafoe was never in the inner councils of the Progressive party and always maintained a detached attitude towards it, but in the campaign he gave generous publicity to its programme and arguments and the sympathetic support of the Free Press undoubtedly contributed largely to the almost clean sweep of the prairie provinces which the new party made in October, 1921. He was frankly delighted at the manifestation of the strength of a new progressive movement which could capture more than 60 seats in the House of Commons at its first general election, but had no illusions about the quality of the leadership which was available for it.

When the Meighen ministry resigned, he played behind the scenes some part in the negotiations and manoeuvres which took place as preliminary to the formation of a new government. What he wanted was another coalition administration in which the more reactionary leaders of eastern Liberalism would be eliminated and the Progressives would have strong representation. But the solid influence of the Quebec Liberals, who had carried every seat in their province, was massed against the accommodations and concessions which were necessary for such a coalition, and so Mackenzie King proceeded to construct a ministry out of his immediate following. The Progressive party did not exercise their rights as the second strongest party to become the official opposition but adopted an attitude of benevolent neutrality to the new administration.

Dafoe continued to stoke the fires of Progressivism in his editorial columns but the gradual revelation of its parliamentary inefficiency soon drove him to the conclu-

sion that it could not be regarded as a serious permanent-rival of the two historical parties, and that its destined function was to serve as an instrument for driving the Liberal administration along reforming paths. From his editorial chair in Winnipeg he operated as one of the chief directors of the strategy of the Progressive party, and it was under his guidance that its possession of the balance of power was successfully employed to secure the passage of various measures beneficial to Canada, such as the restoration of the railway freight rate structure created by the Crow's Nest Pass agreement. His activities, moreover, brought a renewal of friendly relations with Mr. King and other Liberal ministers and he found them quite willing to forgive the sins of such a valuable potential ally.

At this time, however, he was devoting a good deal of attention in his editorials to constitutional questions and keeping up a persistent crusade for the emancipation of Canada from the leading strings of Downing Street. When he began this crusade he was far in advance, not merely of the main body of Canadian public opinion, but also of the views of the Liberal ministry, which was fearful of any rash adventures calculated to put the Conservatives in possession of the weapon of the loyalty cry.

Dafoe freely recognized that in constitutional practice the Dominions were self-governing nations endowed with full control of their own domestic and foreign policies, but he argued that as long as certain obsolete fetters remained and Canada was incapable of changing her constitution in a single syllable without the approval of the British Parliament, she must expect to be regarded as a subordinate political community by foreign countries. Sir Clifford Sifton was in complete sympathy with his views, and the pair simultaneously started a campaign for the education of the Canadian public.

Meanwhile Dafoe kept pounding away at the King Government to bestir itself and take steps to remove what he was wont to describe as "badge of servitude." He praised its stand over the Halibut Treaty which established the right of Canada to sign through her own plenipotentiaries

treaties affecting her own interests, and he accompanied the Canadian delegation to the Imperial Conference in 1923 for the express purpose of stimulating their zeal for changes in the constitutional arrangement of the British Empire. But he returned home none too pleased with the timidity of the Canadian delegation on constitutional matters and disappointed with their failure to record any serious advance towards the goal at which he was aiming.

However, he was not ready to quarrel with the King government on account of its lackadaisicalness on one issue, and when the Liberal government of Mr. Mackenzie King went to the country in 1925 he gave it cordial support; not that he was satisfied with its performance in regard to the tariff and other matters, but he took the view that the interests of Western Canada could not possibly be served by the return to power of a Conservative party which had reaffirmed its faith in higher tariffs.

In the session which followed the general election the emergence of the famous Customs scandals placed Dafoe in a very embarrassed position; he did not for a moment attempt to defend the Government and gave, to the accompaniment of sharp editorial criticism, full publicity to the grave disclosures of administrative corruption and inefficiency which followed. He was obviously prepared to see the King ministry punished for its sins by loss of office, but when through the action of Lord Byng a constitutional issue developed, all his fighting Liberal instincts were stirred and he threw himself heart and soul into the campaign of 1926. Not that he was without grave misgivings about the course pursued by Mr. Mackenzie King, and when the battle was over and the victory won he felt free to confess that none of the major actors in the drama at Ottawa had emerged with any great credit from it; indeed he declared frankly that his titular leader had come out of the melee "with his tail feathers pretty dry."

However, the main point gained in his eyes was that the Governor-General who had attempted to exercise the right of interference in Canadian politics had been put in his place. Moreover the episode

served the King government to take steps for the clearance of the constitutional debris which was clogging Imperial relations, and Dafoe followed the proceedings of the Imperial conference of 1926 with keen interest.

Any tenderness for the Conservative party vanished when Mr. Meighen, for whom he continued to entertain a warm predilection, abandoned its leadership and was succeeded by R. B. Bennett. With the latter's record Dafoe had a long acquaintance and, while he admitted his possession of very definite abilities of a certain kind, he regarded him as the incarnation of reactionary Toryism and a dangerous politician to guide the country's destinies.

Mr. Bennett's performance at the Imperial conference of 1930 furnished Dafoe with the text for a series of caustic editorials, and the Bennett ministry came to recognize that it had no more formidable critic. Indeed few things ever pleased Dafoe so much as the information that the government had taken the Free Press off the list of publications supplied at its expense to its trade commissioners and other officials stationed abroad.

Naturally, he viewed the approach of the Imperial Economic conference of 1932 with intense interest in the role of the detached critic, and before it began he had a curious experience in connection with it. Encountering Mr. Bennett at a social function at Ottawa, he was surprised to be invited by the premier to submit a memorandum of his views about the policies which a Canadian government anxious to do its best for the country, should promulgate at the approaching conference. Dafoe accepted the invitation in the spirit in which it was given and on his return to Winnipeg sat down and compiled the desired memorandum. In a strain of profound economic philosophy it surveyed with a broad sweep the problems and necessities of Canada, and outlined in general terms the fiscal policies and arrangements which in his view would be conducive to an improvement of its fortunes and a stimulation of inter-Imperial trade. Several people who were privileged to read this memorandum were impressed with the

fundamental wisdom of the document, and even Mr. Bennett admitted its merits, but unfortunately the suggestions advanced in it were not allowed to bear much fruit at the conference, and Dafoe found himself compelled to take a very dark view of its results. But no Canadian paper gave such accurate reports of the actual proceedings of the conference or such shrewd interpretations of its developments.

During the post-war years a great deal of confusion developed in the provincial politics of Manitoba. The Liberal government of Premier Norris came to grief in 1922 and was succeeded by a United Farmers administration headed by John Bracken. It was by no means an ideal or particularly able administration, and the Free Press was not committed to its regular support in any way, but Dafoe's long experience in Manitoba politics and his intellectual powers gave him a commanding position as a political advisor, and accordingly he had a good deal to say in the shaping of the policies of the Bracken ministry. Indeed, the chief preoccupation of Mr. Bracken and his ministers was to keep the good will of the editor of the Free Press who acted at times as their guide, philosopher and friend, and at other times as their stern critic, and Mr. Bracken rarely took a step of any importance without consulting him.

Dafoe in later years came to devote a good deal of the space of his paper to international problems from a firm conviction that only by international action could the world be rescued from the desperate depression in which it was wallowing. The result was that the Free Press gradually acquired the reputation of being a paper which had something more than a provincial or even a purely Canadian outlook, and in the outer world it came to be regarded as the Canadian replica of the great independent liberal papers with a world-wide reputation like the Manchester Guardian, the Baltimore Sun and the Frankfurter Zeitung. As his seventieth year approached the red-haired lad who had left his home in Combermere in the early eighties to seek his fortune in Montreal had attained the status of a journalist with an international

reputation, and all over the world his paper was being read as the most authoritative exponent of intelligent and liberal Canadian opinion. He had travelled a long road in the intervening years but it had been a pleasant and interesting journey.

What marked Dafoe off from all but a small handful of his fellow craftsmen on this continent was the amount of hard work, reading and study that preceded the actual writing of his editorials. His style was vigorous, clear and individual. He had a gift of phrase, a sardonic, sarcastic humor, when it pleased him to use it, and great powers of diatribe and invective. But what chiefly marked him off as a political writer was his refusal to be bound to the use only of one of these weapons. He documented his case heavily, backing up his arguments with unanswerable masses of facts and figures and historical analogues and parallels.

His tremendous and endless reading and his capacious memory made him a most dangerous opponent. Too much editorial writing is a bald appeal to traditional prejudices and unsupported statement of fact. This was not so in the case of the Free Press which, especially as the 1935 general election campaign opened, became a storehouse, or rather an armory of weapons against the Bennett government which was freely drawn on from coast to coast by the opponents of the government. The results of the polling in the overwhelming defeat of Mr. Bennett was a source of enormous satisfaction to Dafoe for the prime minister had offended him deeply by heaping the Pelion of his cynically devised "new deal" on the Ossa of his original protectionism. The victory of 1935 ranked in Dafoe's mind with the electoral victories of 1896 and 1915, the first of which brought Laurier to power, and the latter driving Sir Rodmond Roblin from public office.

It was at this time commonly thought that his relations with the Liberal party were much closer than in reality they were, as his friends and associates well knew. He believed, to be sure, that a Liberal government offered a better hope of providing sound policies for the Dominion than a Conservative administration, but he had

no very high hopes of the actual performances of the former, and he sedulously avoided association with the party machine, and examination of the pages of the Free Press from 1935 onwards reveals a persistent sharpness of criticism that Mr. King and his associates were far from appreciating. Some of them failed to understand how a man who had been offered (and refused) one of the plums of office at Mr. King's disposal that of being made minister to Washington could be so ungrateful as to attack the government. But this was a form of argument to which Dafoe was wholly deaf. He pursued his course of independence which the party machinists heartily disliked.

In no field was this independence of policy more completely demonstrated, and in none was the breadth and wisdom of Dafoe's vision more amply demonstrated than in the field of foreign policy and international affairs. The part played by him in the Canadian delegation to the Paris peace conference has been already mentioned. From 1920 onwards he became the leading champion of Canada of the League of Nations and though in 1924 the Free Press shrank back from and opposed the Geneva Protocol devised to put teeth into the covenant, it was not long before Dafoe recanted that belief and frankly admitted error. Thus it was that in the interval between the two wars his writings and indeed the whole content of the editorial page of which he was the unquestioned master turned more and more to the discussion of international affairs. Dafoe was among the first to realize late in 1931 that the Japanese coup at Mukden and the rape of Manchuria would become, unless the damage was repaired, a green light to potential aggressors the world over. It is not too much to say that, so far as Dafoe was concerned, World War II broke out in the fall of 1931.

Never was there prophet more certain of himself and seldom has prophet been treated with more contempt. Whenever occasion offered he sharply attacked the overt acts of the King government in supporting the retreat from the League and the growth of appeasement. Day in and day out he assaulted the European leaders

of that disastrous movement: MacDonald, Baldwin, Chamberlain, Samuel, Simon and the rest in England; Laval, Daladier, Chautemps and the others in France. With relentless and angry persistence he called fruitlessly for new leaders and for new policies, only to receive formal rebukes from the Canadian government and a wide measure of disapproval and dislike in Winnipeg itself, where a large number of Free Press subscribers grew complacently weary of the reiterated prophecies of impending doom.

A striking illustration of Dafoe's policy can be found in the editorial written in great bitterness of spirit on the day the pact of Munich was signed in 1938. As virtually the whole press of Canada applauded the statesmanship of Mr. Chamberlain, the Free Press editorial was entitled "What's The Cheering For?" and in a thousand words of lucid impassioned prose vividly outlined the sham and the disgrace of Mr. Chamberlain's achievement.

From December, 1937, to December, 1939, Dafoe was chiefly employed as a member of the Rowell-Sirois commission on dominion-provincial relations. This task he found of absorbing interest. It was not until Christmas, 1939, that he was back at the job he preferred to any other in the world: editing the Free Press. It was quickly apparent to those closest to him that the commission work had taken much out of him. He was more subject to ill-health and his enormous reserves of strength were no longer with him. But to their unbounded delight his friends knew, too, that the limitations the years were laying on him—he was then 73—were only physical.

The war moved Dafoe deeply. Not only was his son, enlisted in the 1st Division, but he knew, none better, the titanic issues involved and that the future of the world depended upon victory and upon wisdom after it.

His long experience told him what difficulties lay ahead, but his indomitable fighting spirit and his unquenchable hope and belief in the ultimate rationality of mankind gave him a courage that never faltered though often sorely tried.